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THESIS

COUNTERINSURGENCY STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE
CONFLICT TERMINATION:
US STRATEGIES IN EL SALVADOR

by

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June, 1990

Thesis Advisor:

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reform and to compromise on settlement conditions, the persistence of the desire within the US administration to achieve a military victory, and limitations in the types of economic assistance the US offers to the host government and the way this aid is administered and distributed.

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Counterinsurgency Strategies for
Effective Conflict Termination:
US Strategies in El Salvador

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines problems which the US faces in its support of efforts by other governments to defeat revolutionary insurgents. The US has in the past been drawn into supporting conflicts for a protracted period without receiving apparent benefit nor approaching a favorable end to the conflict. This thesis addresses why the US encounters problems in its support of counterinsurgency efforts and why it has difficulty in effectively terminating this type of low-intensity conflict (LIC). This study assumes that the best outcome to achieve US long-term goals in most cases of revolutionary insurgency is a negotiated settlement. The study develops a list of factors considered necessary to produce a negotiated settlement of an insurgency. It then examines the various counterinsurgency strategies used in El Salvador, analyzing their effects on the factors needed to achieve a settlement. The US has improved its approach to counterinsurgency. However, there are problems within US military and political organizations which inhibit the US' ability to achieve effective termination of an insurgency. These include the lack of consistent pressure on the host government and military to reform and to compromise on settlement conditions and the desire within the US administration to achieve a military victory.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This study will examine methods of conflict termination in the case of a type of low-intensity conflict (LIC) in which a major power, such as the United States, is supporting a foreign government's counterinsurgency against a guerrilla movement with revolutionary goals.

Historically, in supporting the counterinsurgency efforts of other countries, US policymakers have often allowed military operations to reach a magnitude and duration way beyond the initial intentions of both military and political leaders, the costs apparently exceeding the objectives. The long-term objectives involved in US support for counterinsurgency conflicts are often unclear. Acceptable, realistic conditions for conflict termination are disputed.

Because a revolutionary insurgency is fundamentally a political problem, successful conflict termination of most advanced revolutionary insurgencies requires a negotiated political agreement as well as the use of military force. Achieving the termination of this type of insurgency differs from that of other types of conflict in that the insurgent faction is relying on the extended length of the conflict to eventually achieve its objectives: it is willing to

sacrifice terrain and space in order to buy time. The insurgents in a protracted guerrilla struggle are not trying to win militarily as much as to survive, to not lose, in the hope that over time the involvement becomes so tedious and unpopular to the incumbent government's internal as well as external supporters that they apply pressure to reduce the negotiating conditions just to be able to end the conflict. External supporters may be forced by domestic pressures to unilaterally curtail their assistance without an agreement being reached.

The United States, as a major power and external supporter on whom the host government is generally highly dependent for survival, has a great deal of influence on the timing and conditions of the negotiating process. In past protracted counterinsurgency struggles, by a certain point the United States has invested so much in the conflict that policymakers tend to feel that the minimum objectives satisfied must be highly advantageous to the US in order to justify the expense thus far (especially if US troops have been involved in the conflict). However, these stated settlement conditions are often so stringent and uncompromising that the insurgents are unwilling to enter into negotiations as long as they have the resources and will to continue the struggle.

As the conflict drags on, US domestic and international support often erodes (if it ever existed) and may apply increasing pressure on policymakers to conclude the conflict as soon as possible regardless of the terms. Due to failure to bring about earlier termination, the US may be forced to conclude its support effort under highly unfavorable conditions. The loss of domestic backing for continuing its support effort can be perceived by the insurgents, who use this knowledge to their benefit at the bargaining table, realizing that the US is experiencing great pressure to curtail its military support.

The feasibility and effectiveness of using military force as a US foreign policy option in certain situations is lowered by a national fear of the difficulty of ending US involvement in a low-intensity conflict (LIC), partly due to the legacy of US involvement in the Vietnam conflict. The US has particular difficulty in controlling and successfully terminating its support of the counterinsurgency efforts of foreign governments. This has contributed to a lack of consensus among military and political officials, Congress, and the public on the issue of whether to support such operations and the scope, character, and length of the involvement, as well as the amount of control the US should hold over host government actions. The lack of consensus and insecurity due to problems with past involvements has

contributed to a policy paralysis when the US is faced with issues related to such support efforts, even while already deeply involved in supporting a counterinsurgency effort.

A current example of this phenomenon can be seen in the case of US involvement in the insurgency in El Salvador. Delays in approval for requested funding, contradictory guidelines, and a piecemeal approach to assistance have reduced the effectiveness of the US support effort.

There are many types of internal war, varying in their goals and scope and the level of internal and external support. This study concentrates on US responses to the political-ideological type of insurgency known as a revolutionary struggle: this is a long-term strategy which gradually organizes a mass base of political support with the goal of changing political values and structures and transforming the economic and social order, to accomplish over time a revolution. Among other tactics, this strategy may involve the use of guerrilla warfare and other "unconventional" methods of anti-government violence and often becomes a protracted conflict.

In cases where the host government is highly dependent on US support for survival, the US has tended to support the host government with a level of military and economic assistance sufficient enough to defend itself and remain in power, to perpetuate the conflict. However, the US has not

provided enough in terms of level of support at one time or enough appropriate assistance, to actually defeat the insurgents militarily or to resolve the conditions which prompted the insurgency and allowed it to become so imbedded politically. The types of US assistance provided are often inappropriate for actually bringing about successful long-term termination of the insurgent conflict. Some tactics and weapons are more appropriate to certain phases of the insurgency than to others, more effective in countering certain insurgent strategies than others. US policymakers should also ensure that they take advantage of the influence from dependence by the host country's government and military on US support to pressure them to reform.

The main concern of this study is with how the US can achieve a negotiated settlement to successfully terminate its involvement in an insurgent conflict as quickly as possible while still fulfilling many of its political objectives, or if such a settlement cannot be reached, when and how the US should initiate its unilateral withdrawal.

Chapter One addresses the different types of insurgencies and insurgent strategies. Chapter Two looks at why the US supports counterinsurgency efforts. It attempts to explain why the US experiences such extensive problems in controlling and terminating its counterinsurgency support efforts. The second chapter also examines some aspects of

American culture, ideology and history as well as inadequate strategic planning which apparently contribute to problems in trying to accomplish favorable, prompt termination of the insurgency. It addresses ways in which US support may contribute to or interfere with the prospects for termination of this type of LIC.

Chapter Three discusses the possible outcomes of an insurgency. It applies negotiation theory to the problem of terminating an insurgency, which, according to a literature survey conducted by the author, has not been extensively done previously. This exercise produces in Table 3.1 a list of conditions apparently necessary to fulfill to achieve a negotiated settlement to successfully terminate most revolutionary insurgencies. "Success" is defined as an outcome which fulfills the majority of US long-term goals, especially those of stability, democracy, US security, and reduced dependence on US assistance.

Chapter Four examines strategies which the US can use in its support of other governments' counterinsurgency efforts, and how each of the strategies likely affects the likelihood of achieving successful conflict termination. 'Conflict termination' is defined as more than the cessation of armed hostilities (a ceasefire) but as a situation where a mutual political choice is made to achieve less than maximum objectives on each side, using the minimum necessary

force to achieve an end to hostilities. This study assumes that counterinsurgency strategy can and should be planned with attention to its impact on effective termination. The chapter creates a typology of counterinsurgency strategies, and examines the instruments used to implement each of the strategies. The analysis concludes that a "combined strategy" is necessary to achieve effective termination of this type of insurgency at the advanced stage at which the United States tends to become involved. However, as a look at the various types of instruments shows, there can be several different mixes according to the different priorities guiding a combined strategy.

After analyzing the problems which the United States has historically faced in supporting and successfully terminating a counterinsurgency effort and the strategies attempted, Chapter Five applies this analysis to the ongoing insurgency in El Salvador. The United States has supported the Salvadoran government and military heavily since 1980, although it has not resorted to direct intervention of US troops. Chapter Five uses a methodology known as a focused comparison, applying the same set of factors to several cases. The case of El Salvador is divided into six sub-cases by different time periods. The time periods are chosen by what the author perceived as changing counterinsurgency strategies by the United States. A

background summary outlines the conflict and the main players. Each sub-section provides a narrative summarizing the significant events of the period, including the dominant insurgent and counterinsurgent strategies, military successes by either side, comparative military and political progress, and pertinent developments in the external support countries and other relevant international events. Chapter Five concludes that while US policymakers have made many mistakes in their counterinsurgency effort in El Salvador, the conditions are currently favorable for a negotiated settlement to occur in the near future. However, since the economic assistance the United States has provided has been devoted more to stabilization than to actual development and reforms, the socio-economic conditions contributing to the insurgency will remain in place. This may contribute in the not-too-distant future to a resurfacing of the conflict. In addition, US support has allowed the regime in the past decade to avoid making (or even prevented them from making) the reforms and concessions needed to achieve a negotiated settlement with results which are successful in the long term.

II. INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY

This chapter examines different types of insurgencies, including their strategies, goals, phases and tactics, focusing on a type referred to as "revolutionary insurgency." It then covers the means, goals, and effects of external support to each side of an insurgency. After discussing the reasons for US support of counterinsurgency efforts, the chapter examines the reasons why the US runs into problems in its support efforts, constraints on that support, and why the US is drawn into supporting protracted conflicts without receiving apparent benefits from its assistance.

A. TYPES OF INSURGENCY

An insurgency is an organized effort by internal actors to take control of the state through violent means. There are several varieties of insurgencies and insurgent strategies. Insurgencies can be characterized by their goals, including secessionist, revolutionary, restorational, reactionary, and reformist,¹ as well as by the forms of warfare the insurgents primarily rely on and their level of reliance on political organization. Insurgency has been

¹O'Neill: 3.

developed as a response of a generally weaker, non-state faction to counter the coercive power of the state and its conventional military tactics. Some insurgents attempt to use political organization to attempt to compensate for the material superiority of their opponents.

This study focuses on revolutionary insurgency. Revolutionary insurgency has been described as "...political warfare that uses armed resistance to overthrow a state and construct a new society."² It is motivated by political-ideological objectives. A type of revolutionary strategy, refined by Mao, involves a long-term orientation of gradually organizing a mass base of political support with the goal of changing political values and structures and eventually transforming the economic and social order. This strategy tends to involve, at some point, the use of guerrilla warfare and other "unconventional" methods of anti-government violence and often becomes a protracted conflict.

Revolutionary insurgency is generally initiated by an educated, highly disciplined and political elite. This leadership often spends considerable time training and organizing first among themselves, then branching out into forming ranks, long before the outward signs of armed

²Olson: vii.

conflict appear. Eventually the movement extends its operations beyond political organization to armed insurgency. The thrust of their strategy is to deny the government the support of as many people and groups as possible, trying to remove the bases of support for the government and its armed forces.

To accomplish his goal, the revolutionary relies on grievances such as social, political, and economic injustice, corruption, foreign domination, and racial or religious discrimination as the means through which the government is attacked.

In the simplest type of insurgency, a faction x, the incumbent government of the state, is in conflict with faction y, the insurgent in rebellion against the incumbent government. There may be two or more insurgent groups actively opposed to the government, combined into a more or less unified coalition. In the type of insurgency on which this study is focusing, the armed insurgent faction is accompanied by a political organization, usually clandestine. This political arm may be more or less inclined or able to also participate in legitimate political processes.

The struggle between the insurgent and the incumbent is over political legitimacy -- who should govern, and how they should govern. One of the principal elements in this struggle is the effort to mobilize popular support.³

³Olson: 20.

Because the essential nature of the threat of insurgency is to political legitimacy, any counterinsurgency strategy concerned with long-term political stability should include attention to this issue.

B. INSURGENT STRATEGIES

Types of revolutionary insurgent strategies include Leninist, Maoist, and the foco (Cuban) method. Instead of following any pure type, contemporary insurgencies generally follow a combination of these as well as some indigenous adaptations to a varying degree. This study concentrates on insurgent strategies which include many defining characteristics of the Maoist strategy: great reliance on popular support, extensive organizational efforts, prolonged conflict with a government with superior conflict resources, and a sequential strategy of stages, beginning with 1) political organization and terrorism, followed by 2) guerrilla warfare, and 3) as support increases and the government weakens, to eventually be succeeded by the "regularization" of insurgent forces, using mobile-conventional warfare.⁴

An alternative to the Maoist protracted warfare strategy, known as foco strategy and used by Castro in his attempt to overthrow the government in Cuba, holds that

⁴O'Neill: 28.

insurgent leaders can forego the necessity of creating a mass-based political movement prior to beginning armed rebellion, relying instead on small to moderate guerrilla attacks, limited organization, and a hopefully weak government. A counterinsurgency strategy relying mostly on military force is more effective against this type of insurgency because of its relatively weak political organization.

C. INSURGENT TACTICS

Insurgent strategies may involve use of a combination of tactics, including semi-conventional military operations, guerrilla warfare, and terrorist actions. Guerrilla warfare is based on the use of mobile tactics by small, lightly armed groups who aim more to harass their opponents than to defeat them. Guerrilla warfare differs from terrorism in that the insurgents' primary targets are usually the government's security forces and key economic targets, not unarmed civilians. Guerrilla units are larger than terrorist cells and tend to require a more elaborate logistical structure.⁵ Conventional warfare involves the direct confrontation of large units in the field. Unconventional methods used by insurgents include attacks on small army patrols and outposts for supplies and weapons;

⁵O'Neill: 4.

disruption of traffic on highways; distribution of propaganda material; creation of an infrastructure to challenge the government's control over the countryside; and urban terrorist tactics such as kidnappings and assassination.

Insurgents know they risk destruction by confronting government forces in direct conventional engagements, and thus try to erode the strength and will of their adversary through the use of terrorism and/or use of guerrilla warfare. These tactics are intended to increase the cost to the government and to demonstrate the government's failure to maintain effective control and provide protection.

D. PHASES OF AN INSURGENCY

An insurgency may go through several different phases, and the strategies and tactics the insurgents use may evolve over time. The various phases and tactics are considered, according to the revolutionary doctrine, to be increasingly progressive. However, they may revert to the tactics associated with a prior phase if it becomes necessary and they may use a combination of tactics in different regions simultaneously.

Typical phases of a revolutionary conflict have been outlined in a study of insurgency by several defense analysts. These phases are not uni-directional nor are they

all necessary (some can be skipped) and dividing lines between phases are not necessarily clear-cut as there may be a lot of overlap in tactics.

Phases of a Revolutionary Movement:⁶

1. Organizational Phase
 - Organization, Education
 - Infiltration of other Organizations
 - Party Formation
2. Probation Phase
 - Infiltration Continues
 - Local Cells Created; National Cells Expanded; Armed Groups Trained
 - Political Activity Increases
3. Initiation Phase
 - Low-Level Violence:
 - Sabotage
 - Terrorism
 - Low-Level Guerrilla Warfare
 - Propaganda: Psychological Operations
 - Political Mobilization of "Masses"
 - Establish Base Areas
4. Insurrection Phase
5. Consolidation Phase
6. Confrontation Phase
7. 'Coup de Maitre Phase' (Overthrow of government)

E. GUERRILLA STRATEGY

In a protracted revolutionary conflict, insurgents using guerrilla warfare methods will trade space and terrain for time: they are willing to give up territory in order to buy continued survival for their movement. Insurgents may

⁶Adapted from Figure in Olson: 24.

choose a strategy for protracted warfare with the objective of simply 'not to lose.' The insurgents hope that the government will grow weary of the struggle and seek to prevent further losses by either capitulating or negotiating a settlement favorable to the insurgents. Insurgents are likely to resist termination of the conflict, seeing no incentive in seeking peace as long as they believe that they can get better terms later on through negotiation. This has been described as "The Power of the Small Belligerent:"

...the side whose war aims in a local war require only that the enemy not finally defeat it is a formidable opponent, even to a major power. It is especially formidable, as the Vietnam war shows, if that major power's government is for domestic or world political reasons anxious to limit, wind down, and stop the fighting. The small-power belligerent, determined to outwit its major power opponent questing for de-escalation and peace, may make a peace of reconciliation almost as hard to achieve as any other kind of peace.⁷

Identifying that the government is dependent on a major power to prosecute the insurgent militarily, the insurgents may anticipate that as support of the conflict becomes increasingly unpopular among the public and/or legislature of the external supporter, the external supporter may face pressures which demand immediate withdrawal with little regard to the conditions of that withdrawal.

⁷Fox: 6.

F. EXTERNAL SUPPORT

As external actors become involved an insurgency may take on some aspects of an external war and the problem of achieving its termination becomes more complex. Many analysts insist that external involvement usually has the effect of postponing termination instead of bringing a prompt, decisive resolution to the conflict.

External actors may choose to support one of the sides involved in an insurgency, the current government or the insurgents, for several reasons. The external support may be formal and open or more discreet and informal. The importance of external support to the outcome of the conflict depends on the relative internal strength and unity of each faction, plus the extent of the opposing faction's external support. When a major power supplies a large amount of assistance to one of the factions, the supported side becomes known as a "proxy" for carrying out that power's goals.

1. Support to the Insurgents

External support to insurgents is referred to by the incumbent government and its supporters as subversion. Subversion can range from allowing exiles and refugees to cross the border, providing sanctuary and the ability to organize, to giving insurgents low-level financial or military aid, to supplying more extensive support such as

advisors or even troops. Subversion can be used to weaken the government of the opposing state in anticipation of impending external war, out of ideological motivations, or as a method of trying to secure friendly, cooperative allies.⁸

Not every insurgency in Latin America since 1959 has been Marxist-inspired or Soviet-controlled. However, the Soviet Union, along with Cuba, has encouraged and supported several insurgencies, especially in Latin America.

2. Support to the Government

External support to the incumbent government is described by the supporter and its allies as foreign aid or assistance, or counterinsurgency support.

"All aid extended to a foreign state stands to benefit the government in power and to that extent all foreign aid is countersubversive. But some aid is more so."⁹

Military assistance and special aid to police forces is designed to strengthen the internal security situation to counter the insurgency. The motivation of another country to support the incumbent government in the struggle may be to preserve the status quo or to maintain or achieve dominance by frustrating the insurgent's bid for an independence that could create too independent a state in a

⁸Modelski, in Rosenau: 25.

⁹Modelski, in Rosenau: 25.

region the supporter dominated or seeks to dominate. The supporter may seek to achieve some ideological objective such as the defeat of the ideologically alien insurgent faction, y.¹⁰ If faction y is supported by another state, B, state B is now also in conflict with faction x as well as indirectly with state A. In this situation, the insurgency becomes a "proxy" external war between state A and state B as well, at the risk of actual external war. If both A and B were to send troops to support their factions, "the internal war would take on the character of an external war."¹¹ A constraint on the scope and level of external support supplied is the concern that such support may provoke increasing aid to the opposing side, and even risk outright external war between the opposing supporters.

There are dangers in the government becoming overreliant on external support. External supporters must take care to not let the conflict become "their" war and to fight the host country's battle for them. Over-reliance may lead to reducing the faction's legitimacy as a valid domestic political force with the moral right to represent the majority of the population, subjecting it to accusations of being a puppet manipulated by external power whims not

¹⁰Randle: 186.

¹¹Randle: 2.

necessarily consistent with the majority of the host country.

External support allows the government to refrain from making changes in policy which might otherwise be used to reduce the internal support for insurgency. External support to the government alters the Dahlian calculus for the political and economic elites of the costs of accomodation relative to that of repression, interfering with the ability to evolve to a competitive regime. Subsidizing the government's war effort lowers the comparative cost of government repression against the opposition.¹² This has the effect of discouraging the host government leadership's motivation for accomodation (carrying out reforms), since the costs of repression are being subsidized by its external supporter.

G. REASONS FOR US COUNTERINSURGENCY SUPPORT

The United States backs counterinsurgency efforts in other countries for a combination of reasons, including security, political (domestic and international), economic and ideological motivations. Support of foreign governments' military counterinsurgent operations are justified under rationale and military doctrine which include: to encourage and assist allies and friends of the

¹²Dahl, Robert, Polyarchy: 15.

US in deterring aggression and coercion; to ensure US access to strategic resources; to reduce Soviet influence and the Soviet military presence throughout the world; to ensure geopolitical security, such as overflight rights, access to military bases, and to maintain secure lines of communication; and to defend and advance the cause of democracy, freedom and human rights. According to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in their "Doctrine for Joint Operations in Low Intensity Conflict,"

the most significant threat to US interests...is not found in the individual cases of insurgency... rather it results from the accumulation of unfavorable outcomes from such activities. Such outcomes can gradually isolate the United States, its allies, and global trading partners from the Third World and from one another. ...It can precipitate the gradual shifting of friends and allies into positions of accomodation with interests hostile to the United States.¹³

The US perception of insurgent struggles against foreign governments to be threatening to itself stems partly from a common view among US policymakers of revolutionary insurgency as being Soviet-inspired, and if not directly caused then at least encouraged and supported for further exploitation and creation of additional proxies such as Cuba, the spread of Soviet influence, and even creation of Soviet military bases. US reaction against insurgency is related partly to its evolution as a major power who wishes

¹³JCS Pub 3-07: I-3.

to maintain the status quo because it sees any political changes to the present international situation as threatening to its superior position.

US doctrine states that a major cause of insurgency in less developed countries (LDCs)

...is the failure of political and social institutions to incorporate the general populace into the modernization and developmental process. ...The inability or unwillingness of a developing nation to meet the real or perceived needs of its people provides a fertile ground for unrest from within the society and for groups and other nations wishing to exploit such unrest.¹⁴

US doctrine acknowledges that, "The US recognizes the legitimacy of popular unrest and may be supportive of it in instances where its goal is self determination or democracy." However the US fears that "US national interest may be put at risk" when groups opposed to US goals exploit this "instability."¹⁵

Stated objectives of the US as an external supporter include restoring "stability," generally interpreted as returning to and maintaining the status quo of the incumbent government remaining in power, or even to install "democracy," while the insurgent group ceases military operations and abandons its objective of overthrowing the government by violent means and its ability to do so.

¹⁴ibid.: I-6.

¹⁵ibid.: I-6.

Achievement of these various goals may require contradictory policies. Achieving democracy is inconsistent with a counterinsurgency strategy which relies on mainly military measures in pursuit of a military victory or a settlement resulting in near-capitulation of the insurgents.

While the US often perceives revolutionary insurgencies as threatening, "the threat is ambiguous, indirect, and involves protracted commitments in dubious circumstances often in support of unworthy governments."¹⁶

H. REASONS FOR US PROBLEMS IN COUNTERING INSURGENCIES

There are several constraints hindering the formation of US counterinsurgency strategy, and its ability to be implemented to prosecute the conflict and achieve termination consistent with US goals.

Unconventional conflicts, in addition to blending the political, psychological and military dimension of warfare, are risky enterprises because they are easily protracted, defy simplistic solutions and are highly susceptible to escalation. US political leaders do not want to be told there is no solution -- that what appears to be a problem really is a condition.¹⁷

1. US Strategic Culture

US policy toward countering insurgencies reflects symbols associated with American political and military culture. US difficulties in developing effective

¹⁶Olson: 4.

¹⁷Holt: 12.

counterinsurgency policy, in limiting its counterinsurgency support, and in successfully terminating the conflict are also due partly to cultural influences.

a. US History and Ideology

One of the problems is the US's own revolutionary history, its democratic ideology and image of itself as a proponent of democracy throughout the world. This is incompatible with the image of supporting military repression against a popular movement claiming to want to increase their self-determination, as many insurgent groups insist. This acts as a constraint on the extent to which the US can rely on military force to achieve a victory in its counterinsurgency effort.

b. US Arrogance and Quick-Fix Mentality

Another aspect of US culture impacting on its difficulties in developing counterinsurgency strategy is the American tendency to approach national security matters with an illusion of omnipotence, a national feeling of invincibility and morality. US policymakers approach national security matters embodying the "can-do" American national character. They often act as though political and cultural problems are capable of being mastered by ingenious schemes. It is the American way to believe that problems can be solved and that they can be solved quickly.

A lack of patience leads to a desired quick-fix mentality, making it difficult to deal with a situation which requires constant attention over a long duration. This is related to another cultural aspect complicating the development of counterinsurgency strategy, which is a US tendency to reduce complex conditions to problems lending themselves to a solution with simple answers. Countering insurgency effectively requires a complex, multi-part response. These cultural factors contribute to the temptation of responding with military force.

c. Division Between War and Peace

Another factor affecting the United State's ability to achieve termination of an insurgency resulting from a negotiated settlement is that the US has historically drawn a sharp distinction between war and peace.

"Traditionally, Americans have insisted upon defining 'war' and 'peace' as distinct and mutually exclusive states."¹⁸

But, once provoked and with the decision made to use military force, Americans have justified the employment of force in terms of moral principles. The national American aversion to war is responsible for the "all-or-nothing" approach; that is to say, total victory over the enemy in an ideological crusade to make the world safe for democracy...¹⁹

¹⁸Bacevich, et al.: 6.

¹⁹Holt: 9.

Thus, once it is involved in such a conflict, US policymakers tend to not want to compromise on their conditions for achieving an end to the conflict. But this phenomenon conflicts with a tendency among the American public to want to end the conflict.

d. Perception of National Interests

Americans have mixed emotions regarding the use of US military power. Americans are willing to incur costs and sacrifices for wars that impinge upon well-defined, self-evidently vital US interests. If not perceived as important to those interests, however, consensus over supporting the use of force diminishes. This is perceived by many US policymakers and military members as a lack of national will. However, the lack of support is due more to a lack of consensus over the threat, and whether the ends, the objective of the counterinsurgency effort, justify the means and the cost, and whether the means and even the objective are morally sound. Counterinsurgency efforts in other countries such as El Salvador come to be regarded by the majority of Americans as peripheral objectives in a non-strategic area. This leads to a lack of consensus and widespread loss of support among the public and thus their representatives in the legislature for continuing supporting the counterinsurgency effort.

American distaste for and dissent over the Vietnam War, as well as the war in Korea, demonstrates that persuading Americans to fight for relatively limited interests, for obscure purposes and with questionable strategy and tactics that challenge American ethical norms and provide no clear criteria for progress, will provoke dissent and resistance within American society.²⁰

e. US Approach to War and Winning

The US approach to war and winning complicates the termination of LICs. The US prefers wars of dedicated national purpose, for decisive, total war, with peace made unconditionally. The Korean War was the first war fought by the US since 1812 that did not end with outright military victory over the enemy. "The frustration and impatience with an inconclusive war was a new experience for an American people reared on a tradition of victory."²¹

The United States tends to view warfare as a zero-sum game, where one nation's gain is the other's symmetrical loss. This is another factor inhibiting US efforts to achieve an actual negotiated settlement which would involved some concessions and compromises on the part of the US. According to Lee, an Army officer writing on conflict termination of low-intensity conflict, these

²⁰Holt: 13.

²¹Motley: 10.

attitudes are reflected in and magnified by the US political system.²²

Both US military and civilian leaderships have difficulty in accepting the requirements and focus to fight a LIC during what is ostensibly peacetime, resulting in a failure to give the US's support effort of counterinsurgencies in other countries the sustained attention they require. For example, according to a group of Army officers conducting an analysis of US military policy in El Salvador, the US has failed to place a priority on attention, personnel and resources devoted to its counterinsurgency support effort.²³

f. US Difficulties in Formulating Strategy

The US political system often has great difficulty defining specific objectives and, when appropriate, using military power and coordinating its use with other policy elements to achieve them. According to the group of army colonels writing on El Salvador, the US effort has lacked well-defined objectives, a comprehensive plan of action, or an appreciation of the resources required to sufficiently prosecute the insurgency, and are unable to see the conflict in whole, instead addressing problems

²²Lee: 17.

²³Bacevich, et al: i-x.

piecemeal.²⁴ Defining limited political objectives and constraining operations to conform to such objectives then negotiating conflict termination short of all-out destruction of either side are not part of the US military training or assigned responsibilities. According to another military analyst relating US strategy to conflict termination,

The fact that we do not think clearly about conflict termination should be of no real surprise. To think clearly about how wars should end presupposes that we think clearly about how wars begin; that we think clearly about strategy; that we think more about ends than we do about means; and that we know what is important to use, why it is important, and, as a result, understand the risks that we will accept to defend those interests and objectives. Since we do not always do these things well... it is not astonishing that US thought on conflict termination is poorly developed.²⁵

A major reason why US thinking on conflict termination is weak relates directly to the strategy formulation process US planners use, and the way they tend to use it.

...at critical junctures during the strategy formulation process, political decisionmakers have...failed to provide the necessary political guidance which military strategists require if they are to develop military

²⁴Bacevich, et al: i-x.

²⁵Dunn, in Cimbala and Dunn: 175.

strategy and conflict termination options and alternatives.²⁶

g. US Cultural Insularity

The US's relative geographical isolation has contributed to producing a cultural insularity which results in widespread cultural ignorance and ethnocentrism, which can limit the effectiveness of national security policy in a less developed country. US policymakers tend to approach national security matters ill-informed as to the cultural sensitivities of the host country, of both the supported faction and of their insurgent opponents. Cultural arrogance often leads Americans to disregard the experience of non-Americans, including reluctance to recognize advice of their host allies when contrary to their own recommendations. US policymakers and military advisors have at times failed to take into consideration or to comprehend the determination and resolve of the insurgents due to their ignorance of the host country's history, traditions and national character.

US counterinsurgency support tends to result in a massive infusion of American culture into the host country and intervention in other than strictly military matters. This may have the result of a destruction of the host government's national identity and legitimacy, and lead to a

²⁶Dunn: 176.

perception of the government as a puppet of US influence. Another result can be the introduction of methods and weaponry not appropriate to the culture, development level, and budget of the host country or the nature of the opponent and type of conflict, resulting in increased dependence on the US and possibly exacerbating their economic problems.

h. Big-War Bias

The US must be able to mix both military force and political means to achieve a viable settlement to an insurgency. However,

A certain legalistic strain in US foreign policy predisposes Americans to regard 'peaceful solutions' and the use of force as an either/or choice; the realpolitik application of both simultaneously sits poorly with many.²⁷

US counterinsurgency strategy must combine a prudent and selective application of military forces in conjunction with other instruments of policy.

Despite recent changes in recently published LIC doctrine and in military structure to respond to LIC problems, for both doctrinal and organizational reasons countering revolutionary warfare goes deeply against the grain of the US military.

...the war in Indochina showed that the US military finds it much more difficult to respond to the sort of

²⁷Motley: 16.

wars now underway in Central America -- where political and military factors are equally important and inextricably enmeshed.²⁸

Traditionally, the US military is a big-unit, high-tech military. Countering guerrilla warfare generally requires small units and fairly simple technology. Although significant improvements have been made, such as the development of light infantry divisions and various special forces organizations created and expanded, the US military is extremely reluctant to modify its big-unit, high-tech orientation.²⁹ The US military leadership encounters problems in supplying the host government forces with the appropriate weaponry, strategies, and tactics relevant to changing insurgent tactics as the phases of the insurgency evolve, and in providing and implementing the right mixture of military force and reforms necessary to actually resolve the conflict.

i. Crisis Reaction vs. Preventive Strategy

Often by the time the US becomes involved in a particular insurgency the conflict has already progressed to the point where the government is in immediate threat of being defeated. At this point with the insurgents strong and confident and government forces weak and demoralized,

²⁸Evans: 187.

²⁹Evans: 188.

the insurgents may be relying mainly on tactics approaching that of semi-conventional warfare and have the upper hand militarily.

US military support is generally very effective at this phase of the conflict and gives government forces the ability to achieve military superiority and hold back the insurgent offensive. US counterinsurgency support is often successful in reinforcing host government forces enough to achieve a more stable situation so the government is not in imminent danger of being overthrown. As the security forces increase in strength and effectiveness, however, the insurgents may revert to a strategy of protracted guerrilla warfare. US counterinsurgency support has been generally less effective against this phase of insurgency and faces difficulty in achieving termination of the conflict.

2. Constraints on Use of Military Power

There are inherent limitations in the ability to which a major power can use its enormous apparatus of coercion in support of counterinsurgency. The major power supporting the government has the material capability and military resources to "out-escalate" its insurgent opponent. However, because of other economic demands on the state, such as competition for social programs and business support, pressures may build up against supporting a

protracted conflict not perceived to be critical to national survival.

In a protracted, "limited" conflict there are many bystanders, both international and domestic, ready to judge the counterinsurgency effort critically. These bystanders tend to hold the major power supporter to a higher standard of accountability than the insurgents. Increasing numbers of the domestic and international public may begin to view the counterinsurgency effort as immoral and emphasize the lack of democratic characteristics of the government the US is supporting. This is another constraint on the extent and methods of military force used to counter the insurgency and the attempt to terminate the conflict militarily.

3. Need to Form Strategy Consistent with Cultural Constraints

US policies related to their counterinsurgency support effort have often made errors in ignoring the extent to which American culture conditions the prospects for success in policy. A government that wages a war consciously or unconsciously in disregard of its own culture invites failure.³⁰ Rather than finding fault with American political culture, we must realize that culture and its derivation style in warfare place practical limits on what US policymakers should attempt to accomplish. This

³⁰Motley: 13.

understanding is needed to design counterinsurgency and termination strategies which work within US cultural limitations.³¹

Before policy involving the direct use of American forces in future conflict is implemented, policy makers must analyze the integrity of US interests involved, the scale of military effort required and the mood of the American public, in order to ensure a realistic understanding of the implications, costs and consequences of military involvement.³²

4. Further Constraints on US Counterinsurgency Policy

For US support efforts countering this type of insurgent strategy, time and cost considerations are more critical than for its involvement in external wars. One of the goals of the insurgent using a guerrilla strategy is to extend the duration of the hostilities, thereby countering the US's traditional goal to end conflicts quickly. US military planners should include in their counterinsurgency support and termination strategies the recognition that US public and congressional support will not last indefinitely (especially if the costs are high) and international opinion might be highly critical. Recognizing these limits should influence the US to moderate its terms for negotiation at an earlier point and insist on host government reforms, before US domestic support is eroded to the point where the

³¹Holt: 15.

³²Holt: 14.

policymakers have no choice but to conclude the conflict at any cost.

III. NEGOTIATION THEORY APPLIED TO INSURGENCY

While a great deal has been written about the causes of revolutionary insurgency and of their progress, very few studies have addressed the termination of an insurgency for an outcome other than a successful revolution. During the US involvement in the Vietnam conflict many commentators addressed the issue of how the US could end the war or withdraw from its involvement. However, a literature survey conducted for this study found almost nothing devoted to the question of how to achieve conflict termination of an internal war, insurgency, or low-intensity conflict, and how the processes and requirements of achieving a negotiated settlement differ from that for an external war. This chapter begins by covering the possible outcomes of an insurgency. Underpinning this study is the assumption that to achieve the stated US long-term goal of stability and democracy in other countries experiencing a revolutionary insurgent conflict, the best outcome in most situations is a negotiated political settlement. This chapter applies negotiation theory to the problem of insurgency, an exercise which, according to the literature survey carried out for this study, has not been done in the past. The goal is to identify factors or conditions that appear to be necessary

to achieve a negotiated settlement mutually acceptable to the parties involved in an insurgency. This application of negotiation theory also produces a list of indicators which can be used to measure the progress of a counterinsurgency strategy toward achieving effective termination. Chapter Four will examine counterinsurgency strategies and apply these factors to gauge and compare the effects of the strategies on the ability to achieve favorable conflict termination of a revolutionary insurgency.

A. POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF INSURGENCY

1. Outright Win by One Side

An insurgency may end in the complete defeat of one of the sides, either the insurgent faction or the government, resulting from a military victory. After an outright win the losing faction will likely cease to exist as a military and political entity, to be exterminated more or less as an organized force.³³ If the conflict ends with the destruction through force of either of the factions, the incumbent government or the insurgent group, negotiations usually do not occur.

George Modelski, a distinguished international relations theorist, points out that in many situations of internal conflict,

³³Pillar: 15.

outright wins by either side are not satisfactory indicators of the degree to which the interests at issue have in fact been frustrated or accomodated. ...the apparent simplicity of the outright win solutions is deceptive, for it creates illusions and misconceptions which may hinder the task of reconstruction after the internal war has ended.³⁴

The destroyed faction may lose its military capability but covertly retain some of its political organization and support and attempt to rebuild itself to re-emerge militarily at a later date. The more brutal the repression against the insurgent faction and its sympathizers, the less likely they will evolve from a disloyal opposition to become a semi-loyal or even loyal opposition.³⁵

2. Capitulation

Insurgency may end in surrender by one of the factions. If the surrender is not unconditional then the terms of the surrender need to be negotiated. Unconditional surrender is known as capitulation. A faction may choose to surrender if it suffers intolerable losses or if its resources are depleted. This could occur through the severing of a faction's ties to its internal population support base or its external supporters, or the loss of critical leadership. A faction might also be induced to surrender if it believes that the opposing faction has

³⁴Modelski, in Rosenau: 125.

³⁵Linz: 17.

obtained vastly superior resources and that the opposing side is willing to continue prosecuting the conflict for a long period. An agreement may be imposed by one side upon the other (capitulation), but this is the result of a military victory and is not considered to be a negotiated settlement.

3. Stalemate

If the insurgency does not result in the decisive defeat of either side there are several other possible outcomes. If no significant military progress has been made for an extended period of time the conflict is at a stalemate. This is the current situation in the struggle between the Salvadoran government and the coalition of insurgent groups known as the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN), which have been in a situation of stalemate for over five years. "Perceiving the stalemate, the belligerents may agree that a continuation of hostilities would result in no gains to themselves."³⁶ In the case of a stalemate there is more likely to be a lot of hard bargaining between the negotiators, and negotiations will be more protracted than if one faction had dominated, depriving the other of bargaining strength.³⁷ In an insurgency,

³⁶Randle: 5.

³⁷ibid.: 5.

extended stalemate may be the situation most conducive for conflict termination and favorable negotiated settlement (favorable in the sense of most likely contributing to long-term stability). The definition of an "extended" time period is as yet unclear, and the perception of this condition seems to vary with the particular conflict and its participants. The US has been involved in the past in limited, prolonged stalemated conflicts in which termination negotiations went on intermittently for years without significant progress nor apparent gains from the continued fighting.

A stalemate is a threshold for producing either an agreement or another round of escalation. At this point the external supporters face a choice of essentially five decisions: to escalate military support to attempt a military victory; to try to negotiate an end to the conflict; to maintain the level of support necessary so its side does not lose but does not win either, resulting in further protracted conflict; to withdraw support altogether; or to adopt a new strategy to try to reduce the opposition to the government through other than military means. There is a danger that protracted military stalemate may lead to ever higher levels of external support, depending on the level of commitment of the external supporters to their host factions and on the supporters' political, economic, and

military ability to maintain escalation. External actors can try to intentionally induce a stalemate to achieve a settlement, by either withholding aid from either side or deliberately providing it to the weaker faction to create an extended balance and hopefully cause both sides to agree to negotiation.³⁸ This condition requires actual or tacit cooperation by the external supporters of each side to limit their support to achieve such a stalemated balance.

B. THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

1. The Agreement to Negotiate

Fundamental to the success of the negotiation process is the willingness of participating factions and external supporters to successfully negotiate an end to the conflict. "The chief impediment to the best of peace plans is the underlying cynicism of all the key parties."³⁹ Stalemate is one of the factors which can induce this willingness to sincerely reach a negotiated settlement. Conditions other than actual stalemate can also prompt this desire by both parties simultaneously, despite a generally held dictum that "the expectation of future success is a

³⁸Modelski, in Rosenau: 143.

³⁹Newsweek (Jan 11, 1988): 30.

reason for opposing a ceasefire, the expectation of future setbacks or stalemate a reason for accepting one."⁴⁰

Stalemate is a necessary but not sufficient condition to achieving a negotiated settlement. The decision to terminate (or continue) a conflict is a combination of both external and internal pressures. For cases of insurgency where the participants are dependent on external support, the actual or anticipated reduction of external support on one or both sides and, even more favorably, its balanced reduction or even curtailment are assumed to be necessary to achieve the willingness on each side to produce a negotiated settlement. Necessary for this to occur is the desire for at least the external supporter of one side and preferably that of both to genuinely want a settlement to be reached.

Other than a stalemate, many of the factors which induce a faction to welcome negotiations at a given time are also often interpreted as reasons for the other side to shun them at the same time: they are perceived as zero-sum (what strengthens the bargaining position of one faction weakens that of its enemy). When one side wants to talk often the other does not, or at least no longer wishes to compromise.

⁴⁰Pillar: 87.

2. Insincerity of Offers to Negotiate

A faction may indicate its readiness to make peace even if it expects no negotiations to result, either because it generally wants peace or because it believes that "...a manifest willingness to negotiate coupled with ostensibly real moves to bring a peace conference into being will have propaganda value."⁴¹ A faction may respond positively to an offer to negotiate, even if it actually prefers to delay negotiations or does not believe that the effort will produce any results. It may do this to affect international and/or domestic public opinion and gain political capital by demonstrating peaceful intentions and avoiding the blame for continued hostilities. A side may try to continue the support of its allies or negatively affect the morale of the opposing faction's forces through offering to negotiate, or trying to dissuade the opposing faction or its external supporters from increasing military resources.

A common tactic is for a side to intentionally appear to negotiate while actually making proposals they are fairly certain include terms unacceptable to the other faction. By including an indication of readiness to negotiate with a demand that the other faction make a substantive concession, a faction can initiate or agree to

⁴¹Randle: 85.

negotiations without making it appear it is acknowledging defeat or anxious to reach an agreement at any costs.⁴²

Often the incumbent government and its external supporters are reluctant to negotiate with the insurgents because the negotiation process itself can add to the status of the insurgents. The mere opening of talks confers on the insurgents a position of equality and improves their legitimacy.⁴³

The belief that the other side is not ready to negotiate, or fear that an acceptance or offer to negotiate will signal weakness to the opposing faction can discourage the leadership of a faction from taking steps aimed at initiating negotiations even when it would otherwise favor them.

A faction's leadership may postpone its willingness to negotiate if it believes it is unlikely to attain certain crucial objectives through a settlement at that time. If one of the factions perceives it is winning, its leaders may still be willing to negotiate a ceasefire, due to war weariness or because they assess that they can gain as much at the negotiating table as they could in combat, without the costs of continued hostilities. Another condition

⁴²Pillar: 82.

⁴³Modelske, in Rosenau: 131.

prompting such willingness is the actual or anticipated reduction or withdrawal of critical external support, even before the effects of such reduction are felt.

C. **TERMINATION CONDITIONS**

1. **Compromise**

One determinant of a faction's willingness to compromise on negotiating conditions is its capability and means to attain its objective. "Changes in the perceived possibility of direct achievement" may account for changes in the readiness of factions to negotiate sincerely and in its level of flexibility.⁴¹ Domestic and international opinion and support as well as access to resources affect this readiness and flexibility.

At the minimum, the proposed terms by either side must not threaten the continued existence and political identity of the other faction. Another essential condition is that the host government offer an amnesty to the insurgents, and make arrangements which will actually guarantee the security and protection of the insurgents and their supporters. Such an arrangement can be made through the services of an international commission to supervise implementation of the agreement and compliance with its

⁴¹Pillar: 46.

provisions, with international reprisals against the faction violating the provisions.

2. Inflexibility

At times the expense in resources and personnel by either one of the primary factions or the external supporters may be so great and the conflict so bitter that the belligerent in question may refuse to compromise on their negotiation conditions on the grounds that they need to justify the expenditure thus far by achieving their maximum objectives.

US policymakers involved in a counterinsurgency support effort have often tended to discourage the host government from pursuing a negotiated settlement given their assessment that "the time is not ripe for terminating the war on terms that realize fully the military investment already made."⁴⁵ As long as they have the resources to do otherwise the US and the host government are usually not willing to terminate the conflict unless under conditions which satisfy all or nearly all of their objectives. Victory is considered to be the full achievement of announced conflict aims through military actions, and may be pursued regardless of the cost and the extremity of the aims.

⁴⁵Fox: 7.

3. Contribution of Changes in Political Leadership

Once a conflict has begun, US political and military leadership are generally reluctant to agree to its termination on anything but favorable terms, preferring instead to continue fighting as best they can, not wanting to recognize or admit that a conflict has been lost or cannot be decisively won. Also,

Because the professional honor of the military leaders is at stake, they are loathe to accept defeat and continue to hope for a military breakthrough; there is no substitute for victory.⁴⁶

Often an elite responsible for the initiation of involvement in a conflict which will result in perceived failure when the conflict is concluded is reluctant to withdraw from the conflict. Such withdrawal can mean the end of the leadership, or could require the admission of its failures and mistakes."⁴⁷ This is another reason why a change in political leadership of either faction as well as that of either of its external supporters is a condition favoring the achievement of a settlement. Historically, the termination of a long and stalemated war has been frequently preceded by a drastic political change in leadership of one of the belligerents.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Handel: 23.

⁴⁷Handel: 26.

⁴⁸Handel: 26.

4. Necessary Conditions

The settlement terms demanded by the US and the host government to gain their maximum objectives are considered unreasonable and unacceptable by the insurgents, who will continue the conflict as long as they retain the ability. In a protracted guerrilla struggle, even once negotiations begin they can be drawn out by either side to stall if they believe they are capable of achieving a military gain in the future. Thus, the offer to and acceptance of an agreement to negotiate, in themselves, are not sufficient indicators to gauge the success of a given counterinsurgency strategy toward achieving a political settlement, although they are necessary conditions for an agreement to occur. Flexibility of the negotiating conditions of one, and more favorably both, sides is a more accurate measurement of the progress of counterinsurgency strategies toward bringing about effective conflict termination.

The negotiation demands offered also depend upon the extent to which each faction's leadership hopes to achieve a peaceful relationship with the other faction in the near future.⁴⁹ Maintaining peace following a cessation in hostilities should not depend merely on the capacity, or lack thereof, of the defeated side to regain its strength, a

⁴⁹Randle: 186.

situation known as a "negative peace". Effective, long-run termination achieved through a negotiated settlement is more lucky to result in a situation of positive peace which will reduce the need for future resort to arms to bring about changes through the fulfillment of some of the more critical objectives on each side. This situation is more favorable for creating a situation of actual long-term stability than a strategy which produces an outright military victory of an insurgency or a settlement involving capitulation.

D. BARGAINING POSITIONS

Deciding to end an insurgency through negotiations, the antagonistic factions have to negotiate the terms of cessation of hostilities as well as attempt to resolve the political differences which initially caused the insurgency. "Neither side has prevailed and the outcome, usually a compromise, may represent various degrees of partial success for both sides..."⁵⁰ If both sides have the resources and will to continue the conflict then each will have to compromise on its maximum objectives to some extent. Since the insurgents have not been victorious militarily the existing government will remain in power, although the political system may be modified as part of the settlement. Both factions are likely to continue to exist in some form

⁵⁰Modelski, in Rosenau: 123.

since a faction would never allow itself to be negotiated out of existence as long as it had the resources to continue fighting.

The militarily stronger party is generally more able to demand favorable terms in a settlement. However, military superiority can be offset to a varying extent by domestic and political support as well as desire for a long-run stability. The relative success of each faction's military struggle as well as their degree of actual and anticipated domestic and international popular support, their morale, and continued access to resources affect the relative strength of their bargaining positions.

E. RATIONAL ACTOR MODEL

One group of termination strategies views the participants in an insurgency, including its external supporters, as "rational actors," having a consistent set of objectives motivating their participation in the insurgency and behaving in ways they calculate will bring them closest to their objectives. The rational decision regarding termination is the product of two separate estimates: the prediction of events if the conflict continued, and the predicted progress and outcome of a negotiated settlement.

If a faction decides that there is potential to achieve their goals either with or without a settlement, then if

assuming they are rational actors, their decision rests on their perceived costs and benefits of using each method. A faction may be discouraged from seeking negotiations if it expects that the costs of war required to induce the enemy to come to an acceptable agreement will be too great, or the delay too long. Anticipated costs as well as the anticipated value of various strategies change for each side during the course of an insurgency, and influence a faction's willingness to negotiate as well as the expected value of a possible negotiated agreement.

Clausewitz assumes rationality on the part of the belligerents.

Still more general in its influence on the resolution to peace is the consideration of the expenditure of force already made, and further required. As war is no act of blind passion but is dominated by the political object, therefore the value of that object determines the measure of sacrifices by which it is to be purchased. This will be the case, not only as regards extent, but also as regards duration. As soon, therefore, as the required outlay becomes so great as that the political object is no longer equal in value, the object must be given up, and peace will be the result.⁵¹

We see, therefore, that in wars where one side cannot completely disarm the other, the rational motives to achieve peace on both sides will rise and fall on each side according to the probability of future success and the required outlay. If these motives were equally strong on

⁵¹Clausewitz: 125.

both sides, they would meet in the center of their political differences.⁵² Clausewitz is describing the ideal conflict situation, in which rational opposing factions have sufficient information to make cost-benefit calculations of when to terminate a conflict. However, the reality is that the participants involved in an insurgency conflict are not always using strictly rational judgment for their policymaking -- at least not apparently rational according to the relative weights and values used by the opposing faction.

Ideological beliefs may undermine the ability of each side to effectively terminate conflict. While seen as some observers as "irrational," it should be recognized that each side is factoring the value of these ideologies into their rational equation of whether to continue fighting. When certain ideological motivations dominate among the leadership of one of the opposing factions they may appear to act more irrationally, favoring the ideological values at the expense of other interests.

F. IDEOLOGICAL AND POWER POLITICAL VALUES

In a revolutionary conflict, competing principles and ideologies may cloud the issues and interfere with rational thinking. Each participant in an insurgency, both the

⁵²Clausewitz: 125.

primary internal factions and the external supporters, holds values related to its involvement in the conflict. These values can be divided into two types: ideological and power political. Ideological values are beliefs held by the majority or at least the leadership of the faction, such as religions or "secular theologies," such as Marxism, democracy, capitalism, and anti-communism.

...often, when the basis for a particular war policy is obscure and remote from considerations of the state's security, when in fact that question does not even arise in the context of the war, then... war aims sometimes become ideologized. Policymakers feel impelled to rationalize war aims in terms of an official or prevailing ideology, which makes it difficult to distinguish the ideological from the power political bases of a war, because leaders often do cloak power political values in ideology.⁵³

The reverse can also be true: ideological motivations can be cloaked under alleged security interests.

Power political values relate to actions considered necessary to preserve the state or the faction and to maintain their well-being. These values are not limited to only those actions necessary to maintain the existence of these entities but also includes their perceptions of their security needs. Principles which factions or states view as security interests often are only remotely related to the goal of self-preservation of the entity.

⁵³Randle: 7.

The incumbent regime naturally regards itself as 'the state,' and insurgents, aspiring to be the state, consider their movement as if it were already a state. Each faction is likely to seek the continued existence of the entity of which they are members. Thus, a faction cannot be expected to agree to any proposed conditions which would in any way threaten, refuse to recognize, or no longer recognize its continued existence.

G. NECESSITY OF DE-IDEOLOGIZATION AND DEVALUATION

Before a negotiated settlement to end an insurgency can be successful, "both the ideological and the power political values of at least one of the belligerents must become less intensely supported."⁵⁴ The competition for values and the intensity of which the ideologies are held must be devalued on at least one side for negotiations to progress. Each faction must begin to perceive less threat to their values from the opposing side and/or that the settlement process can realistically play a part in sustaining those values and in reducing the threat to them.

"De-ideologization" can occur under the following circumstances:

- 1) If the ideological values over which the war is fought are rejected or de-emphasized by one of the factions, the incumbent government, or key external

⁵⁴Randle: 14.

supporters; a serious military or political event can diminish the intensity of a value conflict over which the war is being fought (such as a change in leadership, with the new leadership holding a different hierarchy of values), or if the ideological values are discredited in some other international situation of which the faction is aware;

2) the leadership of either or both factions decides that peace is essential and of greater value than the conflicting values, e.g. if power political considerations such as survival of the state are at stake. "When the state's existence is in the balance, identified values may well have to be sacrificed, at least temporarily;"⁵⁵ or,

3) political or social change within the state or faction results in their discrediting and displacement of the ideological values by others.

A successful negotiated settlement to end an insurgency also requires a "devaluation" of relevant power political values, or a change in interpretation of the threats to security or definition of security. This could take place through a change in government, displacement of a group of power political values by another, or changes in the internal political situation of a key external supporter.

The intensity of commitment to certain values is related to the will of the elites to continue fighting versus other means of meeting their objectives, as well as having the resources and support, including popular support, to continue the conflict. "If the stakes are chiefly indivisible, so that neither side can get most of what it

⁵⁵Randle: 12.

wants without depriving the other of most of what it wants, negotiations are less apt to be successful."⁵⁶ At least one side must somehow be influenced to accept fulfillment of fewer objectives to reach an agreement. Ideally for successful termination with the best chance for long-term stability, both sides agree to less than their maximum conditions.

An insurgent struggle may become too intense and bitter at times to permit agreement on even the most minimal terms of a settlement. At times the issues provoking the war are so ideological and the ideology so firmly held by one or both factions and their supporters that even a partial settlement cannot be achieved without at least one side becoming "de-ideologized:" A "rearrangement of aims"⁵⁷ must occur. War weariness due to the sheer length of the war could "de-ideologize the war issues as a result of heavy casualties or economic costs, and the parties could agree to a ceasefire and a military settlement, but perhaps not a political settlement."⁵⁸

There is probably no generalized calculus enabling us to predict how and when de-ideologization will proceed far enough, when the important thresholds will be crossed, permitting negotiations and a settlement. But when the

⁵⁶Pillar: 24.

⁵⁷Modelski, in Rosenau: 143.

⁵⁸Randle: 199.

elites and decision makers, and possibly the public... hold intensely to the ideological and power political values over which the war is fought, peace will be impossible. The intensity of commitment to these values must diminish if a settlement is to be made, or even attempted.⁵⁹

If the leadership of a faction believes they have the advantage of righteousness or motivation over their adversaries due to holding strong ideological values the faction may keep fighting despite military setbacks which rationally would have induced them to scale down their conditions.

H. ADJUSTMENT OF NEGOTIATION CONDITIONS

Whether a faction chooses to continue using armed force to achieve its objectives depends partly on the nature of the objective. "Some war aims can be achieved only through agreement, because they require the continued existence and willing cooperation of the other side."⁶⁰ Other objectives might be attainable only by exterminating or expelling the enemy faction rather than by reaching an agreement.

This, at first glance, appears to be the rule in the case of insurgency: the objective of the insurgents is to overthrow the government; the objective of the government is to defend its existence and to destroy the insurgents.

⁵⁹Randle: 430.

⁶⁰Pillar: 46.

After all, logic suggests that if realistic grounds for compromise existed within the country then the opposition would not have had to resort to arms for its political motives to be met. The existence of the insurgency indicates the weakness of any internal mechanisms for compromise, and the conflict tends to polarize whatever moderate elements may have existed.⁶¹ The leadership of each faction may hold its values so strongly that compromise is inconceivable, and lines of communication may not be available. Each side in an insurgency is considered a traitor to the other, and is suspicious of the enemy ever allowing it to exist without a struggle.

1. Room for Compromise

However, there may be more room for compromising than is at first apparent, especially after a protracted period of internal war. The primary rationale behind the revolutionary insurgent's will to fight is not just to overthrow the government. The real motivation of many insurgents as well as their supporters and sympathizers is to achieve actual economic and social change and political representation. Feeling unable to accomplish this through the "legitimate" political process, they turn to the method of armed conflict to create a new government.

⁶¹Pillar: 24.

Many insurgent supporters could be persuaded to forego the armed option even while the present government remained in place if a varying level of their objectives were fulfilled through valid reforms and a sincere guarantee of protection of their safety were offered. Armed revolutionary insurgency is, for most participants other than a hard-core, an option turned to as a desperate measure when all other options to achieve actual change and protection against government repression are perceived as invalid. Grounds for compromise may exist in the form of host government willingness to sincerely offer valid reforms and allowing the former insurgents to continue unprosecuted and in existence as a political entity, as well as the insurgents' willingness to compromise on its objectives and an impartial observer available to mediate conflicts and ease tensions, and ideally able to enforce these conditions.

2. Barriers to Compromise

At times the factions, weary of the war and convinced they are stalemated, are willing to work out a compromise political settlement, but the external supporter(s) may not be ready to negotiate, and may even actively prevent the factions from negotiating.⁶²

⁶²Randle: 199.

Extreme ideological motivation in a faction's critical external supporters may severely restrict what the negotiators can accomplish. Supported factions highly dependent on external aid fear aggravating external supporters for its curtailment may result in their capitulation, destroying their chances to achieve an actual negotiated settlement. External supporters may demand participation in the settlement talks, to stipulate settlement conditions, and may attempt to veto terms they do not favor. In the case of insurgencies in the Central America region, because of the dominant position of the US and its heavy involvement in insurgent conflicts in the region, the willingness of the US to support negotiated settlements or at least not undermine them is crucial.

3. Means of Overcoming Compromise Barriers

If the leadership of a key external supporter changes their attitudes and policies toward the insurgency or are induced by domestic public opinion and/or international pressure into doing so they will become increasingly interested in negotiating a settlement and increasingly willing to lower their expectations of fulfillment of objectives.

The agreement to negotiate does not lower the barrier of a faction's lack of confidence in the other side's willingness and sincerity to negotiate a settlement.

A method of building this trust and reducing suspicions is through including confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the negotiation settlement. CBMs can be used to progress from one threshold level to another. A threshold of settlement is a point in the negotiation process where after resolving a certain issue affecting their interests, both parties proceed to the next stage of negotiations. The thresholds demark the limits of the major issues or issue areas in the negotiations. "There may be a series of thresholds for each of the major issues of the war."⁶³ Thresholds for the political settlement tend to be more difficult to cross than those for the military settlement. The leadership of a faction may be willing to accept a ceasefire but not the costs to their values of a complete settlement.

In addition to focusing on the military aspects of increasing confidence between potential adversaries as a way of avoiding conflict through misperception or mistake, CBMs can be broadened to include other measures not strictly military.

Confidence-building approaches are an attempt to counter the dangerous features of a competitive international environment in which potential adversaries mistrust each other and their intentions, and have inadequate information about their capabilities.⁶⁴

⁶³Randle: 14.

⁶⁴Child, in Bagley, 1987: 53.

CBMs are intended to reduce the risk of conflict through misunderstandings. They can lower international tensions by slowing down or reversing the spiraling interaction of suspicion, insecurity and arms buildup. The features which CBMs require to be successful are also essential conditions to achieving and maintaining a successful settlement to an insurgency and its related international tensions, such as openness, predictability, incrementalism, mutuality, balance and symmetry, communication, and verification.

In a settlement agreement CBMs should be combined with measures of positive peace to resolve the fundamental economic, social, and political causes of the conflict. "The process of building confidence is a slow and cautious one in which each individual step must be tested and verified before proceeding to the next one."⁶⁵ Successes at a modest level can be used incrementally to build up to more ambitious stages.

Consistent with the conditions already specified for successful negotiated settlements to insurgencies, Jack Child, an academic with a former military background who specializes in the Latin American region, insists that for CBMs to play a successful role in achieving peace,

⁶⁵Child, in Bagley, 1987: 54.

fundamentally, the adversaries must genuinely want to avoid conflict. If one (or both) of the adversaries believes that aggression is worthwhile, or that a military solution is possible and is a zero-sum game in his favor, or if he is motivated by ideological convictions which permit no compromise, then CBMs will either break down or merely serve to prolong the conflict."⁶⁶

In the stage preliminary to negotiations to end an insurgency, peace "feelers" are sent to the other faction, either secretly or more openly.

There will be talks about talks, consideration of preconditions of negotiations, and agreements upon procedures such as the form of the conference, invitees, agenda, and conference procedures...⁶⁷

4. Necessity of Unbiased Mediator

To successfully achieve a settlement a disinterested third party or parties must play the role of broker in mediating the dispute between factions. External actors with no direct interest in the war are ideal honest brokers. An offer to mediate by a state or organization is more likely to be accepted if an actor has not become too closely identified with either of the protagonists or with the issues of the conflict.⁶⁸ The mediating role may be effectively carried out by international or regional organizations such as the United Nations or the Organization

⁶⁶Child, in Bagley, 1987: 54.

⁶⁷Randle: 85.

⁶⁸Randle: 16.

of American States (OAS), third country officials, or representatives of non-governmental organizations such as the Roman Catholic Church. The mediators must try to settle the original insurgency as well as subsequent issues which have emerged such as disagreements among the external supporters, and attempt to contain the insurgent conflict.

I. COMPONENTS OF A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT

A negotiated settlement to end an insurgency is comprised of two main parts:

- 1) the military settlement: the cessation of hostilities and immediate questions related to military forces, which leads to the "negative peace", disposition of the armed forces of all factions, including terms to prevent resumption of hostilities; and
- 2) the political settlement: negotiations on political, economic and legal concerns to restore positive peaceful relations and a definition of the status of the insurgents and of the future political relations of the insurgents to the incumbents.

Often a faction involved in an insurgency will require a ceasefire as a condition for agreeing to even preliminary peace talks -- this way, the military situation is known and more constant during negotiations. However, in other cases, such as in negotiations throughout the 1980s related to the Central American insurgencies, the military settlement does not occur until political questions have been addressed in detail, and military operations continue while political negotiations take place.

A faction will likely choose to not accept a ceasefire prior to further negotiations if it is not sufficiently satisfied with its comparative military position and thinks it is likely to improve its position with continued fighting. Due to communications advances it is now easier for negotiators to coordinate combat and diplomacy, making it more feasible for a government to negotiate a political settlement prior to achieving a ceasefire. It is more likely now than in previous decades that the military settlement will not precede the political settlement.⁶⁹ The continued conduct of military operations can dramatically affect the progress of the negotiations.

A change in the military position of one of the belligerents will affect its bargaining position and hence its peace policy... A battle won or lost may cause the negotiators of the state or faction to alter their war aims and even result in one party's breaking off negotiations entirely.⁷⁰

If military operations have ceased and political negotiations are ongoing, the insurgents need to retain enough military resources and support to insure better terms in negotiations by being able to use credibly the threat to break off negotiations and resume fighting.

⁶⁹Pillar: 35.

⁷⁰Randle: 8.

1. Military Settlement Issues

The main issues of the military settlement are to stop the fighting and provide for the peaceful disengagement of troops and their withdrawal from the areas of combat.

"The character of the military settlement will depend in large part upon the relative power positions of the factions at the time negotiations began and during their progress."⁷¹

A problem unique to termination of insurgencies is what to do with the troops of each faction, how to demobilize them and integrate them into the state. If the government faction remains in power the government forces will remain the national military. Guarantees must be provided for each faction that the armed forces of the other will no longer be a threat. The fate of the insurgent forces is a negotiating concern which will be very challenging for negotiators to resolve. Insurgent forces may be handled in various ways. They may be demobilized as a military force and disarmed, with guarantees for their civil liberties, or they may be permitted to remain in existence as an independent armed force within a particular area of the state, or even become part of the national

⁷¹Randle: 95.

military force.⁷² Unless these questions are resolved the existence of two forces in the same country is likely to result in the future outbreak of hostilities. The question of the long-term disposition of the insurgents' armed forces may be part of the political settlement. The ceasefire agreement may also contain provisions for the protection of persons and property in zones of combat or areas used by the forces of either faction.⁷³

While the military settlement may contain provisions for the temporary military administration of certain areas of the state, it is generally better for achieving long-term political stability that this issue be left to the political settlement.

2. Political Settlement

If sufficient de-ideologization occurs a political settlement can be negotiated. To Modelski, "the persistence of a settlement depends on the development of techniques for sharing power and its fruits equally between the parties."⁷⁴ A political settlement should address the primary interests of all key actors to be implemented effectively. The negotiation facilitators may help to

⁷²Randle: 86.

⁷³Randle: 86.

⁷⁴Modelski, in Rosenau: 148.

determine the state's constitution or arrange the framework to create a national constitutional assembly.

Various conditions of the political settlement may include: the insurgents agree to disarm and disband; with guarantees for their lives and property, they return to their former places of residence and resume their prewar status; they may be permitted to form their own political party and take part in the peaceful competition of political parties.⁷⁵

a. Elections

The factions may conclude that the competition between them will eventually be by peaceful political means, through their relative ability to win the support of the enfranchised population. Elections have become, for mediators of insurgent conflicts, "the generally accepted mode for resolution of the fundamental questions relating to the future of states."⁷⁶ If elections are the means chosen to resolve many of the political questions between the factions, then the negotiators should help to establish certain rules for them as well as arrange for an independent election supervisory commission to ensure and determine the fairness of the elections and the campaign.

⁷⁵Randle: 89.

⁷⁶Randle: 91.

b. Political Power Sharing

Often insurgents do not trust the fairness of the election process constructed under the rules of the incumbent government nor that the protection of their political candidates can be guaranteed while campaigning, and so they insist that a power-sharing arrangement be formed prior to elections.

Under this arrangement a temporary coalition government is formed to create a situation of political power sharing. The insurgent faction remains in existence as a separate political party, with the understanding that they will be guaranteed a fixed minimum number of posts in the government for at least a minimum period of time.

The political settlement should also contain provisions guaranteeing the civil liberties of all parties. The settlement condition of creating a coalition government will be more likely honored if the factions have about equal bargaining power and the leaders of both factions conclude that,

they must tolerate the inconvenience of cooperating with the adversary rather than bear the costs of continued fighting that promised no dramatic alteration in the relative power position of the antagonists.⁷⁷

This is analogous to what is often referred to as a Dahlian calculus: when the costs of accommodation are

⁷⁷Randle: 90.

perceived to be less than the costs of repression, or in this case, the costs of conflict, then the elites decide to cooperate.⁷⁸ Both sides may agree to this situation hoping that in the future the other faction can be eliminated from the coalition, either through peaceful political competition or subversion.⁷⁹

c. Partitioning

In a situation where no grounds for compromise can be found but both sides have wearied of fighting the state may be partitioned. The factions may agree that the military and political forces of each shall remain in existence, but physically separated from the other. In this case, the assignment of territory will be intensely debated.

Each faction will want to continue to maintain its authority in areas controlled by it at the time of the ceasefire, and each will want to obtain control over areas that will enhance its future political (and economic) position.⁸⁰

Separations may be designed as temporary or permanent. It may result in the creation of a new state. The partitioned area for the former insurgents may be autonomous or independent. The partition solution may be necessary if the factions cannot de-ideologize enough to cooperate. This is

⁷⁸Dahl, Robert Polyarchy, p. 15-16, 43.

⁷⁹Randle: 90.

⁸⁰Randle: 89.

a form of negative peace and generally has a low probability of long-term stability.

The faction leaders will not look kindly upon a division of their state and will probably regard the partition solution as temporary, until combat can be resumed at some time after a respite or until a future conference can somehow resolve the question of the unity of the state.⁸¹

J. COMPLIANCE

A negotiated settlement must address questions of compliance, such as how all parties can be made legally responsible for fulfilling the terms of a peace settlement, and assurances that the factions will abide by the settlement. The parties should attempt to provide each other with assurances that the peace terms will be respected.⁸² The settlement might vest authority in a supranational or international organization to police the terms of the agreement. Settlements have a better chance of being successfully implemented if an international commission supervises the implementation of the agreement. Violations and complaints of violations should be handled by a peacekeeping commission composed of representatives of impartial states or international organizations.

⁸¹Randle: 90.

⁸²Randle: 202.

K. ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT

From the above analysis a list of conditions or factors can be made which apparently need to be fulfilled to achieve a negotiated settlement to terminate a revolutionary insurgent conflict in a situation where both the government and the insurgents are receiving critical external support. Each factor is accompanied by a list of indicators which apparently contribute toward its progress. There is a lot of overlap as well as interdependence among these conditions, in that changes in a particular indicator may affect more than one factor, and some factors may also be indicators which in turn affect other factors. A summary of these factors and indicators appears in Table 3.1. The factors are listed in what appears to be in their order of priority.

The ability of a counterinsurgency strategy to achieve such a settlement can be assessed by speculating their effects on each of these factors. The actual necessity of each of these factors to produce an agreement and the effects of the various strategies on these factors under varying conditions can be analyzed by comparing actual strategies implemented in the attempt to counter different insurgencies and seeing how the differing strategies affected each of the factors and the subsequent outcome, either an actual settlement or increasing or decreasing

progress toward one. Another method, which will be applied in Chapter Five, is to look at a particular insurgency in which the government's strategy has varied over time to see how the factors were affected under each of the different strategy periods, then assess whether the potential for achieving negotiations was increased.

TABLE 3.1: CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL TERMINATION OF INSURGENCY

| Factor | Indicator |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Desire/Sincerity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer and acceptance of negotiations of each side to want settlement - Settlement talks by representatives of each side - Increased flexibility in stated settlement conditions - Reduction in domestic sympathy for either side - Domestic pressure for conclusion to conflict - Agreement to work on compromise - Actual agreement on minor (inclusion of CBMS in settlement process) - Government reforms offered - Government reforms implemented - External supporter credible pressure for an agreement - Actual or anticipated reduction in external assistance - Extended stalemate - War weariness - International pressure and support for an agreement - De-escalation of conflict - New leadership of government and/or factions - Support of military for settlement, or external pressure on military to achieve and honor settlement |
| Extended Stalemate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No significant military progress by either side - Balanced external support - No significant changes in increasing legitimacy and popular support for either side - Decreasing domestic support for both sides |
| Primary External Supporters Want Settlement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Statements in favor of negotiations - Support offered to negotiation process |

- Credible threats to make support contingent on reforms and/or negotiations progress
- Reduced domestic political support for backing conflict
- Increasing economic difficulties in supporting country
- International political pressure against continuing (especially among supporter allies)
- Increasing threats to supporter from sources other than insurgency demanding priority resources
- Participation in settlement talks
- New leadership in supporter countries
- Threats by opposing supporter to escalate if agreement is not pursued

De-escalation of conflict

- Actual decrease in external military assistance
- Reduced number or absence of semi-conventional operations by insurgents
- Reduction in domestic internal resources
- Reduction in number and intensity of offensives/counter-offensives
- Increasing constraints by external supporters on types of military aid
- Reduction/absence of external supporter advisors/troops
- Reduction in number of insurgent/military casualties
- Reduction in number of civilian (noncombatant) casualties
- Increased non-military aid by external supporters
- Creation of viable political options to conflict

Flexibility of Terms Offered By One or Both Sides

- Devaluation of power political values (reduction in perceived threat from opposing faction, increased threat from competing priorities, or perceived increased security from settlement commission)

- Deideologization (new leadership, war weariness, discrediting of ideology)
- Impartial Third-Party Mediator - Mediator accepted by both sides (including external supporters)
- Proposed Meeting on Neutral Territory - Meeting place acceptable to both sides
- Necessary Conditions- Amnesty offered by government
- Included in Proposal- Security guaranteed by commission
 - Provisions for fair elections, incorporation of insurgent group as political party
 - Provisions for political power sharing
 - CBM provisions
 - Effectively addresses issue of disposition and organization of troops of each faction, acceptable to both sides
 - Arrangements for impartial international commission to supervise agreement implementation, compliance

IV. STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE CONFLICT TERMINATION

This chapter will examine various counterinsurgency strategies which have been proposed or implemented by the US during the history of its participation in counterinsurgency, including its experience in the Vietnam conflict, along with some strategies used by other countries in their experiences with counterinsurgency efforts, such as the Soviet Union, Britain, and France. The chapter develops a typology of ten categories of counterinsurgency strategies, and briefly outlines the means available to carry out each type of strategy. Chapter Three identified the factors which appear to be necessary to achieve a negotiated political settlement to terminate an insurgency and conditions which indicate progress toward achieving such a settlement. Chapter Four will examine how each of the counterinsurgency strategies affects the factors which are in turn assumed to affect the likelihood that successful termination will occur.

The term 'conflict termination' is used to describe more than merely the cessation of armed hostilities, a ceasefire, but involves a situation where a mutual political choice is made to achieve less than maximum political objectives on each side, using the minimum necessary force to achieve an

end to hostilities. "Only those who can point the way to peace without victory, yet peace with at least some of the hoped-for fruits of victory, can claim they have 'solved' the problems of war termination."⁸³

According to a study on conflict termination written in the 1970s,

...the termination of war is a complex process and that process varies in its purposes and details from one case to the next. However, understanding that it is a process leads to a search for strategies, rather than for particular terms or conditions, related to successful termination.⁸⁴

This suggests that counterinsurgency strategy should and can be planned with attention to its impact on effective termination. Conflict termination is the responsibility of national policymakers as well as of the military leadership.

A corollary to devising strategies to achieve conflict termination of a revolutionary insurgency is understanding what started it and what keeps it going. The conflict continues when the two sides have incompatible, unrealized, minimum objectives, and have enough human and material resources which they are willing and able to allocate to the conflict. Thus, the conflict will continue until there is a change in either the goals, expectations, resources, and/or

⁸³Fox:viii.

⁸⁴Foster and Brewer: 2

calculations of the future situation and likely outcomes of at least one of the belligerents.

To achieve 'successful' termination, in most cases of insurgency it is necessary to create conditions most likely to produce a positive peace through arriving at a mutually acceptable agreement. 'Success' is defined as sowing the conditions for a stable government, both political and economic. The ideal result of US counterinsurgency assistance would be 1) reduced conflict in the host country and translation of political opposition into the formal political process; and 2) the long-term stability of a civilian, democratic government which is not threatened by its own military and does not threaten its neighbors nor US interests, is generally supportive of US interests, and is able to gradually decrease its dependence on the US and build a functioning economy. This study assumes that achieving a mutually accepted, negotiated settlement is fundamental to achieve these results in the case of most revolutionary insurgencies at an already advanced state when the US becomes involved. This study does not address the issue of preventive strategies, nor how to 'nip insurgencies in the bud.'

To many Americans, by at least 1970 the Vietnam conflict seemed interminable and unwinnable, full of contradictions and offering little or no gains to the interests of the US.

But, as an examination of the range of proposed counter-insurgency strategies shows, "The all but unanimous call for some kind of end to the war does not conceal deep differences as to what kind of end should be sought and how high a price should be paid for it."⁸⁵ There are tradeoffs for the US between achieving earlier termination, fuller realization of military policy objectives, and the levels of sacrifice and resource expenditures continuing the conflict would entail. The range of strategy types applied to counter ongoing insurgency conflicts is shown in Table 4.1, below. Within a given strategy, the emphasis on the several means available may vary. Table 4.2 shows many of the options available.

A. A STRATEGY OF MILITARY VICTORY

A strategy designed to achieve military victory against another country's insurgent opponent involves using the superior military force and capabilities of the United States, either directly against the insurgents or indirectly, through supporting the host government to demonstrate that the costs of continuing the conflict will,

⁸⁵Fox: viii.

TABLE 4.1 TYPOLOGY OF COUNTERINSURGENCY STRATEGIES

1. Pursuit of Military Victory: through completely or mostly military means
 - a. Sudden, Severe Blow: Undertake an all-out offensive or attack on strategically-chosen critical target to achieve annihilation or capitulation
 - b. Gradual Escalation: Gradually increase offensive actions and criticality of targets to make opposing faction realize the increasing costs of continuing the conflict so they will concede to US/host government terms
2. High-Low Strategy: Counter the various insurgent phases with an appropriate level and type of response, increasing and decreasing assistance as insurgent tactics change.
3. Dual-Track or 'Fight and Talk' Strategy: Offer to negotiate a settlement while simultaneously keeping military pressure high to induce opposing faction to sincerely want settlement
4. Induce Stalemate: Provide just enough military assistance so the government is not overthrown to try to induce a stalemate to create a situation favoring a settlement
5. Dealing Directly with Insurgent External Supporters: Curtail insurgent support, with the goal of either achieving military victory or inducing stalemate to achieve negotiated settlement
6. Attempt to Dissolve Unity of Insurgent Organizations: Attempt to exploit factionalism among insurgent group to reduce morale, coordination, effectiveness
7. De-escalation: Reduce level of conflict to indicate to opponents good faith in wanting to negotiate and creating a 'propitious climate' for settlement
8. Increasing Government Popular Support and Legitimacy: Attempt to reduce the number of insurgents through

reforms to make populace less willing to use military means to oppose the government

9. **Emphasis on Appropriate Intelligence and Surgical Use of Force:** Make providing rapid, tactical intelligence the focus of the counterinsurgency campaign; followed by discriminate strikes and small-unit operations against insurgents
10. **Combined Strategy:** Use a mix of the instruments of national power, to achieve various goals. i.e., a military victory, stalemate favoring a settlement, or to buy the government time to reform to increase government legitimacy and reduce popular support for the insurgents. Involves various mixtures of each instrument and emphasis on different tactics.

**TABLE 4.2 INSTRUMENTS TO IMPLEMENT COUNTERINSURGENCY
STRATEGIES**

1. **Military Means:**
 - a. Direct Intervention with US troops
 - b. Indirect Intervention: US advisors, military training, military assistance (lethal and nonlethal), pressure for military reforms, attempts to increase military professionalism
2. **Political Means:** assistance to strengthen political institutions
 - a. civic action programs
 - b. pressure on government and security forces to respect human rights
 - c. pressure and assistance for judicial reform
 - d. pressure and assistance for political reforms
 - e. support for creation and management of electoral process
3. **Economic Support**
 - a. infrastructure development
 - b. assistance and pressure for economic restructuring and reforms
 - c. debt relief
 - d. food aid
 - e. provision of loans and credits
4. **Information assistance**
 - a. intelligence support, training, equipment
 - b. guidance and pressure for development and debate
 - c. assistance with developing psychological operations (PSYOPs)
5. **Diplomacy**
 - a. Support for negotiation efforts
 - b. Assistance to improve cooperation and relations of host government with other nations

the insurgents and its supporters, far outweigh the potential benefits. This calls for damaging or destroying the insurgents' principal means of economic and military support, cutting them off from external sources of supply, causing a large number of insurgent casualties, as well as targeting for demonstration effect against the will and unity of the insurgents, to either defeat them outright militarily or to induce them to capitulate, to seek negotiations on US/host government terms. According to this strategy, to achieve a military victory or to achieve bargaining power sufficient to receive the desired terms, the US and host government must take all-out offensive operations which inflict a high level of pain against the insurgents and destroy as much of their fighting capability as possible (short of use of nuclear weapons). Proponents of this strategy insist that the US and its supported side should resist entering into negotiations, or at least avoid approaching them seriously, until the sufficient level of pain and damage have been inflicted, unless the insurgents agree in advance to US conditions. US resistance to pursuing a negotiated solution is defended by the rationale that, "In dealing with the communists, control commissions and similar bodies cannot be relied on to exact compliance with the terms of an agreement. There is no substitute for

clear and present force with the determination to use it."⁸⁶

The necessary level of pain required varies and is a matter of debate among US strategy analysts. Means used to carry out this strategy include use of strategic bombing and other massive firepower.

1. Sudden, Severe Blow

One type of strategy for achieving military victory is known as a sudden, severe blow. Proponents of this are critical of the US strategy of gradual escalation and believe that the United States should practice immediate, large-scale escalation and all-out war. Some propose even introducing US troops, to achieve a rapid, victorious end to the conflict. Other strategists argue against the use of troops in this type of LIC, and insist they should be used only as a last resort.

Advocates of the sudden, severe blow argue that inflicting such large costs suddenly against the insurgents will have a negative effect on their morale and will to continue the fight, and persuade them to rationally turn toward peace (at US terms) or be destroyed. Proponents of this strategy criticize political constraints on the military effort, accusing them of impeding a rapid end to

⁸⁶Sharp: 155.

the conflict. They believe the political leadership is more concerned with placing constraints on the scope, form and pace of military operations than with allowing a strategy to be implemented which is directed at a particular outcome or has a high probability of victory. The politically imposed constraints reflect a desire by policymakers to avoid provocative or politically sensitive actions that might lead to escalation or to undesirable domestic or international political consequences. However, advocates of lifting political restraints claim that the political leadership tends to focus on avoiding certain undesirable outcomes rather than on the means to achieve particular desirable outcomes.

2. Graduated Escalation

This strategy calls for slowly increasing the frequency and severity of attacks, to gradually increase the level of pain through "carefully calculated doses of force," raising the threshold as the insurgents do not cooperate. Part of the rationale behind this strategy is reluctance to introduce the full military power of the US against a weaker opponent due partly to the constraints of domestic and international opinion and economic cost, and partly for fear of provoking a response in kind or even direct intervention by the opposing external supporters. Such a strategy may involve a 'carrot and stick' approach of offering incentives

to the insurgents to reduce their aggression but gradually increasing reprisals if they do not. Since the level of conflict increases over time such a strategy will likely result in a protracted conflict.

B. HIGH-LOW STRATEGY

Unlike a gradual escalation strategy, a "high-low" strategy follows the insurgency phases described in a Maoist insurgent strategy. According to this guidance the United States would carry out "low" support consisting of only advisory military assistance functions unless the insurgents make a transition to conventional warfare. This phase would require "high" operations to counter large insurgent formations. The US should withdraw or withhold from using its ground forces, returning to "low" support when the insurgency is in a guerrilla warfare phase, "...when operations would involve the kind of lengthy, wearing sweeps and small-unit fights that characterized the Vietnamese war."⁸⁷ In this view, each phase can be countered with the appropriate type and level of response. Overall costs of the conflict are lowered, and US military support is increased at times when it can be most effective. This strategy also assumes that conflict will be protracted.

⁸⁷Killebrew, in Cimbala and Dunn: 136.

C. DUAL-TRACK OR 'FIGHT AND TALK' STRATEGY

This strategy calls for indicating the intention to pursue a negotiated settlement but sustaining heavy offensive military operations, even during the negotiation period, to maintain pressure on the opposing faction to negotiate and ensure favorable conditions for the US. This strategy is advocated by Admiral Sharp, the Commander-in-Chief of the US forces in the Pacific (CINCPAC) during four years of the Vietnam conflict, who recommends that military operations against the insurgents "should be pursued to the point where they will be prepared to make major concessions in exchange for relief from the pressures applied against them."⁸⁸ The US should continue military pressure, make US general objectives publicly known, and demonstrate its resolve to continue supporting their side of the conflict while awaiting signs that the insurgents are ready to negotiate toward some achievement of those objectives -- and maintain that pressure during negotiations. Such a strategy argues against the method used by the Johnson administration in the 1960s whereby the US frequently paused in its bombing campaign to gauge North Vietnamese reaction and demonstrate US willingness to bargain.

⁸⁸Sharp: 153.

Proponents of 'fight and talk' insist that cessations of these pressures without exacting major concessions in advance provides the insurgent faction the ability to exploit the lull to rebuild and resupply enough to sustain aggression and encourage its external supporters to increase their support, then break off negotiations as soon as they have regrouped and regained the necessary forces to resume fighting. This strategy insists that to be successful in its quest for military victory or to persuade insurgents to reach a settlement on mostly US terms, the United States must exhibit complete confidence in its ability to win the conflict and indicate its willingness to use the full range of its military superiority if necessary, and that the US must not let itself be driven to 'premature' negotiations in its eagerness to resolve the conflict. Proponents of this strategy assume the existence of a link between a successful military offensive and the successful push for a settlement on US terms, believing that if enough territorial control is established that battlefield successes can be translated into negotiation terms.

D. INDUCE STALEMATE

This strategy involves providing just enough assistance to the host government so that its military capabilities are balanced with those of the insurgents and their level of

internal and external support, so a stalemate is induced. It assumes that a situation of extended stalemate can be used to create general war weariness on both sides and convince them to try to work out a negotiated solution instead of continuing the conflict. Achieving a stalemate in a case where the insurgents also receive external support involves either actual or tacit cooperation with the opposing supporters or sufficient intelligence and analysis to know with a large degree of certainty the extent of support and how to counteract it, and/or the ability to cut off the supply to the insurgents through interdiction efforts.

E. DE-ESCALATION

This strategy involves reducing the scope and scale of the military effort against the insurgency, although not to the point where a stalemate is induced or the government can be overthrown. The goal is to gain the ability to continue military support for the longer period of time needed to counter an insurgency, and to provide the types of military assistance more appropriate to fighting an insurgency. According to this strategy, de-escalation is needed to give the United States the ability and confidence to demonstrate to the insurgents and their supporters that the nation is more willing and able to accept the costs of continuing the

conflict over a long period of time. Because of the reduced military cost and the reduced level of collateral damage and casualties resulting from the more appropriate weaponry and training, the effort is less costly economically and politically. Thus US policymakers will conceivably have less difficulty in maintaining domestic consensus for the counterinsurgency support effort. Observing this ability and resolve, the insurgents' incentives for delaying negotiations will be reduced and they will become more willing to reach a settlement. Included in this strategy is the recognition and admission that the conflict will not be quickly resolved.

Other proponents of this strategy point out that an aim related to ending the insurgency is reducing the level of conflict in the country, through means other than intimidation and repression. In this view, a measure of US success is when the scale of violence is forced back down to a level that can be handled by indigenous civil authorities.

LIC in allied countries requires that US forces act in concert with the forces of the host country... and that the host country's forces ultimately bear the brunt of settling their own problems. ...For the US, the barometer of success should be the operational success of the host's forces, measured in decreasing requests for US assistance.⁸⁹

⁸⁹Killebrew, in Cimbala and Dunn: 135-136.

F. DEALING DIRECTLY WITH OPPOSING EXTERNAL SUPPORTERS

This strategy involves trying to end the insurgency or reduce the level of conflict by lowering or terminating their external support. Means of support targeted by this effort may include: politically reinforcing statements that advocate the political legitimacy of the insurgents' cause and protest the "immorality and illegality" of the US-supported counterinsurgency effort; diplomatic recognition; economic assistance; and the offering of sanctuary as well as military assistance. This strategy assumes that the insurgents are highly dependent on their external support, would be ineffective without it and thus have to capitulate, that alternate sources of support are not available, and that external supporters can be persuaded or intimidated into curtailing their assistance. This strategy may also involve cooperating to try to induce a stalemate.

G. STRATEGY OF DISSOLVING THE UNITY OF INSURGENTS

This involves attempts to exploit the rivalries and factionalism within insurgent groups to erode their organization, cohesion, communications, and ability to orchestrate offensives and other operations. This strategy requires knowledge of the insurgents sufficient to be familiar with potential for increasing factionalism. The strategist must be familiar with the racial, religious,

ethnic, and cultural characteristics of the insurgency as well as political and military factors to understand the needs, interests, and motivations of the insurgent group.

H. STRATEGY OF APPROPRIATE INTELLIGENCE AND SURGICAL USE OF FORCE

This strategy recognizes that insurgents seek to gain and maintain the initiative through actions that weaken the government through means such as deliberate acts of terror, military attacks against weaker security installations, propaganda, and destruction of the country's economic infrastructure. Necessary for success in all of these operations is insurgent security.

Security provides time, protects vulnerabilities and weaknesses, and most importantly, gives the insurgent the freedom to exercise initiative. Security is the insurgent center of gravity.⁹⁰

Accurate intelligence on insurgent organizations, operations, personalities and goals is necessary to counter the insurgents' center of gravity. If sufficient appropriate intelligence is gained, then it is possible to use military force more efficiently, thus controlling the level of conflict and preventing escalation. The intelligence effort and design required for effective

⁹⁰Manwaring, in Cimbala and Dunn: 61.

counterinsurgency is very different from that for other types of conflict.

Collection, fusion and analysis of all-source information should be done at the operational and tactical levels, not only at the national and command levels. Because insurgent forces are highly mobile, intelligence must be rapidly passed to military forces. Higher level intelligence organizations often tend to serve their own needs and tend to be slow in responding or not understanding the needs of the operational unit. An account of the intelligence effort supporting US operations in Vietnam demonstrates the need for tactical-level fusion.

With emphasis on combat rather than intelligence operations, and concentration of intelligence assets at division and higher levels, it should not be surprising that American units tended to conduct seemingly never-ending operations moving through the jungle without contact or making contact under circumstances other than those determined by the enemy. Given these conditions, it is understandable that artillery, air, and man power were wasted against ill-defined targets.⁹¹

Collection efforts should emphasize human intelligence (HUMINT) over more high-tech collection means; in terms of quality and volume, the best source of intelligence in an insurgent conflict is from human sources such as prisoners, defectors, informers, and non-insurgent citizens.

⁹¹Manwaring, in Cimbala and Dunn: 68.

The right type and amount of information can enable security forces to carry out a series of quick, surgical operations. This would ideally be followed by moving civil authorities into the affected areas to implement programs designed to reestablish local, state, and national legitimacy.⁹² Through gaining access to the right kinds of information a strategy emphasizing intelligence can help achieve successful, prompt termination.

I. STRATEGY OF INCREASING THE GOVERNMENT'S POPULAR SUPPORT

This strategy assumes that insurgency arises mainly because some aspect of the political system is considered illegitimate and thus counterinsurgency strategies must be aimed at restoring legitimacy for the government in as many sectors as possible, in order to retain and gain popular support and prevent potential opposition from joining the insurgents. Instead of relying on force, this calls for trying to bring about changes in aspects of the regime, such as its leadership, authorities, military officers, political system, and economic policies, which are the focus of the popular discontent contributing to the insurgency.⁹³ This strategy aims not at killing insurgents but on reducing

⁹²Manwaring, in Cimbala and Dunn: 65.

⁹³O'Neill: 279.

their number by making them less willing to use military means to oppose the government.

An aspect of this strategy involves US efforts at nation-building, intended to develop the political, economic and social structures of the host country to reduce support for the insurgent option.

J. COMBINED STRATEGIES WITH SEVERAL GOALS

These strategies involve using a combination of the many means available and calls for the coordinated, integrated use of force in combination with a mix of other instruments. Combined strategies may be tailored to the specific conflict and are more effective if guided by a common strategy. Advocates of such a strategy believe that insurgent conflicts have complex causes and thus a complex solution and time are necessary. These strategies vary in the degree and type of their self-imposed constraints, in the priority placed on the different components, and the specific mix of instruments and means. The various means which can be applied in a combined strategy are shown in Table 4.2.

Many proponents of a combined strategy recognize that "operations in the LIC environment may be of long duration and require extensive assets."⁹⁴ Since the combined

⁹⁴JCS: I-12.

instruments "work directly and over a long time," US policymakers and the public "must be patient to allow the political, economic, and social forces to work to the advantage of US interests."⁹⁵ These strategies assume that while the primary objective of US involvement in the counterinsurgency effort is defeat of the insurgents, the means of carrying this out may not be only through destroying insurgent units but also trying to increase popular support for the government through a combination of such tactics as psychological operations (PSYOP), political reforms, and civic action programs. Enough military force is provided to keep the government from being overthrown but not enough for it to achieve an actual victory against the insurgents, while the other components, such as reforms and training, are given time to work to eventually result in the loss of support for the insurgents and gains in strength and legitimacy for the government.

K. EFFECTS OF COIN STRATEGIES ON TERMINATION INDICATORS

1. Mainly Military Strategies To Achieve Victory

Chapter Two outlined some of the political and cultural constraints on US counterinsurgency efforts, such as the problems of countering the 'power of the small belligerent' engaging in a strategy of attrition in a

⁹⁵JCS: I-15.

protracted insurgency. US planners must take these realities into account when designing counter-insurgency strategies.

Two major considerations are time and cost. History suggests that the US public and legislature will likely be unsupportive of a large-scale military effort (in terms of cost, and especially personnel) over a long period of time when such actions are not perceived to be in the vital interest of the United States, especially if pursuit of the goal and methods used appears to be inconsistent with US ideology and the public feels they are being drawn into ever-increasing support while "progress" in the effort and its benefits are not obvious. A long-term, large-scale military effort does not appear to be feasible given the political, economic, and ideological constraints identified in Chapter Two.

As the US experience in Vietnam demonstrated, popular support may have more impact on the use of force or a termination decision "...than any single military strategic or tactical condition."⁹⁶ A strategy of gradual escalation becomes, over time, a long-term, medium-large scale military effort.

⁹⁶Lee: 36.

a. Medium-large Scale, Long-term Effort

A drawback of a gradual escalation strategy which relies almost exclusively on military force is that it does not resolve the fundamental conditions that contributed to the insurgency, but all-out military effort has been constrained so the conflict can drag on indefinitely. Over time, as the populace perceives the gradually increasing costs of the conflict but see little benefit to the US, the amount of resistance to continuing the conflict will expand. This large-scale military effort over a long period of time offers the least likely chance of being able to survive the constraints on US policy and will likely result in the least consensus.

Given that a large-scale, long-term military support effort does not seem to be viable given the constraints on US policy, US policymakers have two primary options. One alternative is to pursue a massive, even unrestrained effort over a short period of time to pursue rapid termination in the form of an outright military victory or through causing enough damage and erosion of insurgent will to persuade them to capitulate.

b. Small-scale, Short-term Effort

Given the advanced phase of a revolutionary insurgency at which the United States usually becomes involved, and assuming that both the insurgents and the host

government are being supported by major powers, a short-term, small-scale military effort does not appear to be a realistic option. It would not be effective because of the initial weakness of the government and its armed forces (which contributed to the extent of the insurgency), the scope of military assistance needed to offset that being received by the insurgents, and inattention to the weakness of the government and other conditions contributing to the insurgency. A long period of time is needed to make improvements in the organization, training, and equipment shortfalls in the government forces.

c. Small-scale, Long-term Effort

A small-scale military support effort by the US must be sustained by the US for a long period of time, and supplemented by the use of non-military instruments. Through this strategy, the US can demonstrate that it is willing and able to accept the costs of continuing the conflict over a long period of time. Because of the reduced military emphasis and increased attention to political considerations such as human rights abuses and reforms, the effort is less politically costly as well. The US policymakers involved in such a counterinsurgency effort will conceivably have less difficulty in maintaining domestic consensus for the counterinsurgency support effort.

d. Large-scale, Short-term Effort

Against other types of insurgents who do not place as much emphasis on political organization and ideology as the participants in an advanced revolutionary insurgency, such as urban "terrorists" or insurgents relying on a foco strategy, a primarily military strategy can be effective in achieving a "victory," as the defeat of insurgent groups in several Latin American countries such as Brazil, Uruguay, and Bolivia in the 1960s and 1970s demonstrates. However, insurgent movements with a great deal of political organization and ideological motivation are more firmly embedded into the political and social fabric of the population and have such widespread influence, sympathy, support and control that they cannot be defeated using force alone without incurring massive noncombatant casualties, widespread destruction to the country and economy, and increasing the risk of adding to the disloyal opposition.

By the nature of internal warfare, it is difficult to distinguish actual insurgents from non-insurgents, and supporters from sympathizers, and both from "legal" political opposition, and all the above from those who have no strong opinion and just want to be left alone. Over-reliance on unrestrained military methods will likely

polarize society further and may result in increased support for the insurgents.

Some critics of a strategy relying on mainly military means argue that the massive offensive capabilities of the US such as strategic bombing and firepower are ineffective if not combined with appropriate and timely intelligence. Without this type of information and its rapid transmission to military forces, the massive firepower is being expended against territory with little effect against either insurgent will or capabilities, with potentially counterproductive results.

Such offensive measures have a limited effect against a low-technology opponent who can adapt to counter such methods. Against such an opponent the gains are generally minimal in comparison to the extent of the US support effort and the cost of the resources expended: the effects of offensives relying on massive firepower have often been offset by camouflage, adjustment of tactics to using smaller units, and other adaptations.

The Vietnam conflict also demonstrated a lack of understanding among US strategists on the extent of the will of the insurgents and the effects on that will of the bombing operations. US policymakers also made the error of assuming that their own rational calculations were shared by the insurgents, not realizing that the value of their

ideology and goal was factored into their rational calculus of continuing the conflict.

Attempting a strategy of military victory through either a rapid buildup or through graduated escalation may result in the host government and its military forces becoming over-reliant on the US, both for its war effort and for other functions. When a rapid US military buildup is used, the host country does not develop an ability to prevent such a situation from resurfacing. The conflict will likely return since the fundamental weaknesses which encouraged the insurgency to reach such threatening proportions to require US assistance have not been resolved: a weak, illegitimate government relying on repression to stifle political and economic change, and security forces which are poorly organized, trained and equipped and respond crudely to the task of countering terrorist or insurgent actions. The government may be regarded as even less legitimate for having to be "bailed out" by a major power and unable to muster enough domestic support to withstand such threats on its own. If sub-cultural cleavages such as race, religion and/or regional differences as well as class antagonism are involved, then US military support for the government will likely reinforce accusations of the white, wealthy, industrialized and foreign power using force in alliance with their illegitimate government to deprive them of

their rights. This erodes further the government's already limited legitimacy.

Attempts at termination through a military victory may successfully end the conflict in the short term. However, the outcome of a conflict ending in victory for the US-supported side through a strategy primarily relying on military measures is a negative peace. Many conditions are left in place for the conflict to resurface in the future after the survivors rebuild their political organization and military capability. Coercion will likely be needed to suppress a resurgence of the conflict. Trying to prevent such recurrences through military means would result in a 'Carthagenean' peace, forcible extermination of not only actual armed insurgents but of any possible sympathizers or perceived potential opposition of any type, as well as a high level of civilian noncombatant collateral casualties and destruction of much of the countryside and economy. Such a 'peace' would require a costly military effort, as well as great cost in physical damage to the countryside, economy, and human resources. Also necessary to consider is the cost to the United States in terms of its domestic and international image as a democracy, world leader, and benevolent government. Military victory short of a Carthagenean peace (which is too incompatible with US history, ideology, culture, and need for the support and

respect of its allies) is only postponing the time when the actual issues need to be dealt with, and increasing the scope of the problem each time it resurfaces. Even the option of insurgent (and potential insurgent) annihilation, if the US supported it, does not bode well for the future stability and economic potential of the host country and its ability to create a democracy (claimed to be a goal of US counterinsurgency support). Such a result would likely have negative consequences on the host country's continued dependence on US assistance.

2. Host Country Dependence and Reconstruction

Further complicating a US victory is host country dependence on US economic support and war materiel:

...even the most successful military intervention is likely to saddle the US with obligations that will survive long after the war itself ends. Prudent policymakers will view the cost of that postwar obligation...as part of the price of admission to any small war.⁹⁷

Another consideration following a victorious military effort is the postwar disposition of the military forces which the US built up.

Greatly expanded beyond their prewar configuration, those forces are likely to become a drag on efforts to restore healthy internal development and may also complicate American efforts to create regional stability. ...An army lacking a clear sense of purpose is likely to become doubly a burden.... The victorious army that proves troublesome to its own government may

⁹⁷Bacevich, et al: 47.

also pose problems for neighboring states. In building up the forces of one country, the US may inadvertently create problems for others and for itself.⁹⁸

US counterinsurgency support should incorporate a mechanism to draw down the host country forces, such as loaning weapons only for the duration of hostilities.

3. Fight and Talk Strategy

When the United States is involved in a low-intensity conflict, the objectives are supposedly limited. To terminate a conflict with limited objectives, and to end hostilities promptly with some but not total success in achieving these limited objectives, there must be some give and take on each side -- the aim is not to annihilate the opposing faction. "The need to 'win' can lead to the loss of the longer-term relationships and goals that are sought by trying to 'win' the conflict."⁹⁹

A problem with the 'fight and talk' strategy is that unless the US is willing to adjust its expectations of what can be achieved at the bargaining table and be at least somewhat flexible on its settlement conditions, then it is actually pursuing a strategy of military victory despite its claims to be trying to achieve a negotiated solution.

⁹⁸Bacevich, et al: 47.

⁹⁹Olson: 37.

An examination of the terms offered and the amount of flexibility in those terms indicate whether in reality US policymakers are pursuing a military victory, in the desire to achieve their objectives in full while making few if any concessions themselves. The willingness to negotiate involves compromise on both sides -- if one side is not willing to give in at least somewhat then it is not negotiating sincerely.

Tactical success in an offensive may result in less willingness by the host government and US policymakers to compromise. It boosts their belief, at least temporarily, that a victory is possible, and can even inflate their conflict objectives and thus the settlement conditions. This would result in postponing the offer of US/host government terms which the insurgents might be reasonably expected to accept, if the insurgents still have the capability and will to continue military operations.¹⁰⁰

Another drawback of the dual track strategy is that in a revolutionary internal conflict, the relative military positions and successes are often not translated equally into political success at the bargaining table, as pointed out in Chapter Three. Considerations other than strictly military successes affect the relative bargaining strength.

¹⁰⁰Fox: 7.

Proponents of the US/host government quest for military victory often insist that the insurgents are not sincerely approaching negotiations or are not bargaining in good faith, since their conditions are not agreeable to US policymakers. A critical look at the content of the settlement terms offered by each side (i.e., whether they violate the necessary minimum conditions outlined in Table 3.1, such as the need to not threaten the continued identity and existence in some form of each faction) and the amount of flexibility of the conditions by each faction over time will indicate whether either side is actually sincere in pursuing the negotiated settlement option.

4. Stalemate

The problem with a strategy of intentionally inducing a military stalemate is that if not accompanied by other substantive reforms and credible pressure by the United States to reach an agreement it may result in a continuation of the conflict. In the Vietnam conflict the United States was able to create a stalemated situation in which the other side was unable to "win" militarily. However, the war dragged on for years at very high costs, in economic terms and prestige, until the United States had to withdraw due to domestic pressures.

L. REQUIREMENTS OF COMBINED STRATEGIES

To be successful in achieving a negotiated settlement, a combined strategy must be based on an understanding of the conflict aims of the insurgents and their supporters and sympathizers. "Thus war termination imposes upon statesmen and strategists the highest burden of understanding the opponent in order to defeat him rather than annihilate him."¹⁰¹ A strategy must aim at countering what Clausewitz would describe as their 'center of gravity.'¹⁰² Because the center of gravity of insurgents is popular support, the most effective counterinsurgency strategies aim at increasing the popular support of the government and carrying out actions which would reduce support for the insurgents.

Termination strategies involve definition of military conditions and the means for achieving them that are consistent with and likely to produce political outcomes acceptable to both sides of a conflict.¹⁰³

As described in Chapter Two, in an insurgency, at least in its early phases, there is an asymmetry of military power and the actor wishing to change or overthrow the government cannot directly challenge the superior force of the host government. This requires the application of what Sun Tzu

¹⁰¹Cimbala: 6.

¹⁰²Clausewitz, On War: 23.

¹⁰³Foster and Brewer: 5.

calls 'indirect force.'¹⁰⁴ The thrust of the revolutionary strategy is to deny the government the support of as many people as possible. Indirect force is applied through the use of moral power.

If carefully done, the use of moral influence can undermine the legitimacy and the position of another actor by breaking the bonds which unite a people, its political leadership, and its protective military/police organization.¹⁰⁵

As government legitimacy is increasingly questioned, the strength of the government forces can be weakened. By transforming the conflict from the level of military strength to focus on a struggle for legitimacy, the insurgents can not only attempt to obtain enough leverage and influence for better settlement terms, but also the power of the small belligerents can be used to strive for overthrow of the government.

Planners must keep in mind when devising counter-insurgency strategies that a balanced political-military effort is necessary. This involves:

1. understanding the insurgent's environment and its center of gravity;
2. creating the necessary and appropriate intelligence organization and collection effort;

¹⁰⁴Sun Tzu: 77, 79.

¹⁰⁵Manwaring, in Cimbala and Dunn: 60.

3. creating an effective and efficient security force; and
4. establishing the appropriate organization and objectives for the counterinsurgency effort.

These four factors are interdependent, and the shortfall or absence of any of them will diminish or even negate the effect of the others.

Military support to the host government can buy time for it to rebuild and for reforms to take place, in order to increase government legitimacy and reduce support for the insurgents. However, if the reforms are not implemented or substantive, then such a strategy will just set the stage for a seemingly intractable, interminable conflict into which the US is drawn into supporting, at great cost, with seemingly no returns, and no solution in sight.

In a combined strategy, US assistance should be appropriate to the culture of the host country. The aid should help the host country's military actually protect the population; secure, rebuild and develop the economic infrastructure; isolate the insurgents from the population through increased intelligence effectiveness; and assist the civil government in developing its administrative and service functions. According to this strategy US support must, in addition to countering the immediate military threat, address the problems which are contributing to causing and exacerbating the insurgency.

A combined strategy will not succeed if actual systemic changes do not take place while the US support effort is ongoing. Stabilization through military and economic assistance can produce a situation of stalemate which can persist indefinitely, costing the US a great deal.

For example, training and materiel assistance to the host military and security forces will not effectively achieve conflict termination unless organizational changes occur as well. Serious deficiencies frequently characterize the security forces in countries experiencing revolutionary insurgencies, such as: personal loyalties which transcend the formal chain of command; a tradition of semiautonomous regional centers of authority which do not respect the chain of command; lack of leadership skills and technical proficiency; an inadequately paid officer corps and resulting widespread corruption; and recruitment and conscription practices which reflect the social structure of the society, limiting their effectiveness in defending the government.

Some of these deficiencies are contributory factors to the insurgency itself. They are a reflection of the deeper societal problems which permit a revolutionary movement to take root.¹⁰⁶

Despite successes of US advisors and training, even if such training is appropriate to fighting an insurgency, it may

¹⁰⁶Manwaring, in Cimbala and Dunn: 69.

not be adequately used to counter the insurgency unless the senior leadership has acquired and accepted them as well. To increase the government's legitimacy and effectiveness the US must encourage organizational as well as technical improvement among government and military officials, if necessary by:

...linking specific changes with appropriate rewards as a final means of leverage if other less confrontational efforts fail. ...this factor emphasizes building and equipping a relatively small military force structure capable of finding and beating an elusive and dedicated enemy. Numbers and ratios of government troops to insurgents are not nearly as important as motivation, training, and appropriate equipment.¹⁰⁷

The US must ensure that the types of assistance and their actual implementation are actually resolving the problems contributing to the conflict and not exacerbating them (i.e., the type of military assistance and training must be appropriate to countering an insurgency).

A combined counterinsurgency strategy that emphasizes "nation-building" support and economic assistance over military assistance may still have negative effects on the goal of achieving effective termination. Inappropriate assistance may in fact be giving incentives to host country elites to continue the conflict and act to strengthen the military, at the expense of the authority of the civilian government. Economic assistance must contribute to

¹⁰⁷Manwaring, in Cimbala and Dunn: 70.

improving the socio-economic structural conditions that
exacerbate the insurgency.

V. US COUNTERINSURGENCY SUPPORT IN EL SALVADOR

This chapter applies the factors determined in Chapter Three to be necessary to achieve a negotiated settlement to end an insurgency to the strategies used by the US over the last ten years to support the government of El Salvador in its fight against a revolutionary insurgent faction.

A. METHODOLOGY

This study uses the focused comparison method, applying a list of factors equally to several cases to assess the effects of the differing counterinsurgency strategies on the factors and on the likelihood for achieving a negotiated settlement. The study divides the case of El Salvador into six sub-cases by the time period. The time periods are divided by the differing counterinsurgency strategies used by the US and Salvadoran government and the Salvadoran military in its ten-year conflict with a revolutionary insurgency group, the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front.

The time periods are as follows:

Period One: 1979-80;

Period Two: 1981-early 1983;

Period Three: mid-1983-mid-1984;

Period Four: late 1984-mid-1986;

Period Five: late 1986-1989; and

Period Six: 1990 to a projection extending to the following two years.

The dominant counterinsurgency strategies by the US and El Salvador are explained in the text below describing each period, and are summarized in Tables 5.1 and 5.2.

Table 5.1 shows the amount and types of US assistance to El Salvador, and the ratio of economic to military assistance. Table 5.2 takes the factors and their indicators described in Table 3.1 as being necessary to achieve a negotiated settlement in an insurgency, and applies them to the case of El Salvador. The table shows how the indicators as well as the counterinsurgency strategy changed during each period. Changes in the dependent variable show whether progress toward a settlement increased or decreased during the period. The dependent variable was formed by a weighted composite of negotiation offers and acceptances of each side, whether settlement meetings actually occurred, and events when one or the other faction indicated flexibility in its conditions either prior to or during settlement talks. Under the assumption that flexibility in a faction's settlement terms indicates actual sincerity in reaching a compromise agreement, an event of a faction relaxing a settlement requirement are weighted by 1, indicating their highest priority. Negotiation offers and

acceptances may indicate progress toward a settlement, but as Chapter Two explained, each side in an insurgency often agrees to or offers to negotiate even when it has no intention of actually meeting, or of reaching a settlement unless on their maximum terms, which is not actually a negotiated settlement. Because such offers and acceptances do not necessarily indicate progress but are an important part of achieving a settlement, such events receive a weight of .25. Actual meetings are assumed to indicate somewhat more progress than mere offers, though since sincerity may still be lacking, the number of events of settlement talks is multiplied by .5. The weights are multiplied by the number of events of their respective factors. The three totals of the weighted factors are then added together to create the dependent variable, known as "Progress Toward a Negotiated Settlement." Because the time periods vary in length, they had to be adjusted. Each raw total is then divided by the number of months in the period to create an adjusted dependent variable (DV) score, shown in Table 5.3. The study also considers whether changes in the factors believed necessary to achieve a settlement are a direct result of a change in counterinsurgency or whether they are due to events totally unaffected by, or exogenous to, a change in strategy. Most of the changes in the settlement factors and indicators are apparently due to a combination

of effects, from both the changed strategy as well from exogenous effects not directly attributed to a change in strategy. For example, a reduction in Soviet assistance to the FMLN due to severe economic problems, or a change of leadership in the United States are exogenous variables, not directly affected by a change in the dominant counterinsurgency strategy used in the Salvadoran conflict.

This method has problems of control and of relating cause and effect, due to the difficulty of isolating events to ensure that the changes in the factors were actually due to the changes in strategies. Many of the factors may be affected by forces other than components of the counterinsurgency strategies. Where these exogenous forces are apparent, I will mention them and try to assess their effects -- whether they reinforce or contradict the actual strategies. Despite these limitations, this type of analysis is still a useful tool for assessing the ability of the differing counterinsurgency strategies for inducing or discouraging the achievement of a negotiated political settlement and to gauge progress toward that goal by examining changes in the indicators related to each factor. Another problem is the availability of data on each of the phenomenon. Insurgency by its nature is a secret affair, security needs being paramount for insurgents' survival. Thus, obtaining any information at all on insurgent numbers,

strategy, sympathizers, unity and external support, etc., is generally difficult, and what information that is obtained is generally classified. The reliability of the data received is also often difficult to assess. When looking at characteristics of the factions it is necessary to remember that different strategies can occur in different regions simultaneously, and that various factions within a side may have differing preferences and actions. This study chooses what are apparently the dominant strategies and positions of each period.

Another difficulty is with dividing the time periods, due to the nature of strategy in general. How can a change in strategy be pinpointed? Strategy changes are generally not announced (policy changes often are), or may be announced long before or even after implemented -- or not actually implemented at all. At times, leadership may recognize that it has de facto changed its strategy after noticing that over time its accumulated policy changes reflect this. Using declarative policy statements is inadequate because actual policies as well as the sincerity and focus of their implementation may differ markedly from advertised policy -- and often do. I attempt to divide a period into a new strategy on the basis of a combination of statements, policy changes, and changed emphasis. Admittedly, this method is imprecise but still useful for

TABLE 5.1

| PERIOD | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3/4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 |
|--------------------------------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------------|--------------|
| FISCAL YEAR (in Mills \$s: using current \$s) | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | est. 1990 | Pro- 1991 |
| U. S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE | 5.0 | 35.4 | 116.0 | 81.3 | unk | 146.3 | 312 | 225.8 | 205.4 | 166.9 | 86.0 | 91.4 |
| FMS | - | 10 | unk | 46.5 | 146.3 | 134.8 | 142.2 | 114.3 | 85.5 | 85.5 | 84.6 | 90.0 |
| MAP | - | 24.4 | unk | 33.5 | 176.8 | 10.0 | 120.4 | 110.0 | 118.0 | 80.0 | 0 | 0 |
| IMET | - | 1.0 | unk | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.5 | unk | 1.5 | 1.9 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.4 |
| U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE | 90.0 | 125.0 | 186.1 | 245.5 | 215.3 | 326 | 313 | 449.2 | 319.3 | 292.4 | unk | 284.0 |
| ESF | - | - | 115.0 | 140.0 | 120.2 | 210.0 | 177.0 | 311.5 | 200.0 | 185.0 | 130.6 | 180.0 |
| DEV. ASST. | - | - | 36.2 | 58.8 | 41.0 | unk | unk | 85.0 | 75.6 | 67.7 | unk | 64.1 |
| PL480 | - | - | 34.9 | 46.7 | 54.5 | unk | unk | 52.7 | 43.7 | 39.7 | unk | 39.9 |
| RATIO OF ECON TO MIL ASSISTANCE | 18:1 | 3.5:1 | 1.6:1 | 3.0:1 | 2.5:1* | 22:1 | 1:1 | 2:1 | 1.5:1 | 1.75:1 | UNK | 3.1:1 |

* US ADMIN. CLAIM

TABLE 5.2

| YEARS | 1980 | 1981-MID 83 | MID 83-MID 84 | MID 84-1985 | 1986-1989 | 1990-1992 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| PERIOD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| COIN STRATEGY ² US SAL GOVT SAL MILITARY | PREVENT OT/REF MIL/VIC MIL/VIC | MIL/VIC MIL/VIC MIL/VIC | REF/ELEC DEF/REF MIL/VIC | DEEMP/REF/MIL/VIC DEF/REFORMS MIL/VIC | PACIFY/MIL/VIC MIL/VIC | REFORM/NEG SETLMT NEG. SETTLEMENT MIXED |
| FMLN STRATEGY ² PRIM TACTICS | SEMI-CONV | SEMI-CONV | RURAL GUER. WARFARE | PAID POLIT. SUPT/ NEG./RULES & GUER URBAN WARFARE | BUILD POLIT. BASE/ GUER WARFARE/ SABOTAGE/ NEG. | BUILD POLIT BASE/ GUER WARFARE/ NEG. SETTLEMENT |
| NEGOTIATION OFFERS ² / ACCEPTANCES BY SAL GOVT BY FMLN BY US BY USSR/CUBANICA | NO NO NO NO | YES YES YES NO | YES YES YES NO | YES YES NO NO | YES YES NO NO | YES YES UNK NO |
| SETTLEMENT MEETINGS ² SAL GOVT/FMLN US/FMLN | NO NO | YES NO | YES NO | NO YES | NO YES | NO YES |
| FLEXIBILITY IN SAL GOVT/MIL CONDITIONS ² FMLN | NONE NONE | NONE LOW | NONE LOW | NONE MODERATE | ALMOST NONE HIGH | MODERATE HIGH |
| POPULAR SUPPORT ² FOR SAL GOVT FOR FMLN | LOW HIGH | LOW HIGH | HIGH MOD | MODERATE MODERATE | LOW LOW | MODERATE-HIGH LOW |
| DOMESTIC PRESSURE ² FOR NEG SETTLEMENT IN EL SAL IN US | LOW LOW | MOD HIGH | HIGH HIGH | MODERATE MODERATE | LOW LOW | MODERATE-HIGH LOW |
| INTL PRESSURE FOR ² NEG. SETTLEMENT | MODERATE | HIGH | HIGH | MODERATE | LOW | MODERATE |
| SAL GOVT REFORMS ² | LOW | LOW | HIGH | LOW | LOW | MODERATE |
| ACTUAL/ANTICIPATED ² REDUCTION IN EXT ASST. TO SAL GOVT TO FMLN | NO NO | NO YES | NO UNK | NO UNK | NO YES | YES YES |

TABLE 5.2 (continued)

| YEARS | 1980 | 1981-MID 83 | MID 83-MID 84 | MID 84-1985 | 1986-1989 | 1990-1992 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| PERIOD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| MOST MILITARY SUCCESSES ² | FMLN | FMLN | FMLN | GOVT | STALEMATE | STALEMATE |
| SUPPORT OF SAL MILITARY FOR NEG. SETTLEMENT ² | NO | NO | NO | NO | NO | MODERATE |
| BALANCED EXTERNAL SUPPORT ² | UNK | UNK | UNK | UNK | NO | POSSIBLY |
| ECON DIFFICULTIES IN EXTERNAL SUPPORTER(S) ¹ OF SAL GOVT OF FMLN | NO NO | NO NO | NO NO | NO UNK | NO YES | NO YES |
| US CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE FOR US ¹ TO REDUCE SUPPORT/WTHDRAW | LOW | HIGH | MOD | LOW | LOW | MODERATE-HIGH |
| NEW LEADERSHIP - SAL GOVT ² FMLN/FTDR US GOVT USSR/CUBANICA | YES NO NO NO NO | YES NO YES YES/NO/NO | YES NO NO YES NO | NO NO NO NO NO | NO NO NO NO NO | YES NO YES NO NO |
| DE-ESCALATION OF CONFLICT ² | NO | NO | NO | NO | NO | YES |
| MEDIATION OFFERS ² | MEXICO | SDP/LA | CONTRA CTRIES | CONTRADORA/ CATHOLIC CHURCH | CATHOLIC CHURCH | UNITED NATIONS |

NOTES: 1. Exogenous Variable (not directly affected by a change in strategy)
 2. Changes can be due to a combination of ES/US strategy
 3. Can be directly attributed to a change in strategy

Abbreviations used: CONTRA CTRIES: Contradora Countries
 DEEMP/REF/MILVIC: De-emphasize reform/ military victory
 MIL/VIC: Military Victory
 MOD: Moderate
 PACIFY/MILVIC: Pacification/ Military Victory
 PREVENT OT/REF: Prevent Overthrow/Reform
 REFORM/NEG SETLMT: Reform/ Negotiate Settlement

TABLE 5.3 DEPENDENT VARIABLE SCORES

| PERIOD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| YEARS | 1980 | 1981-MID 83 | MID 83 - MID 84 | MID 84 - 1985 | 1986 - 1989 | JAN-MAY 1990 |
| NEGOTIATION OFFERS/ACCEPTANCES (X.25) | 1 (FMLN) 1 (SAL GOVT) | 3 (FMLN) 1 (SAL GOVT) 1 (US) | 2 (FMLN) 2 (US) | 2 (FMLN) 2 (SAL GOVT) | 5 (FMLN) 2 (SAL GOVT) | 1 (FMLN) 1 (SAL GOVT) |
| SETTLEMENT TALKS (X.5) | — | — | 2 FMLN/US | 2 FMLN/SAL GOVT | 4 FMLN/SAL GOVT | 1 |
| FLEXIBILITY IN CONDITIONS (X1.0) | — | 1 FMLN | — | 1 FMLN | 4 FMLN 1 SAL GOVT | 4 FMLN 2 SAL GOVT |
| RAW DV SCORE | .25 | 2.25 | 2 | 3 | 8.75 | 7 |
| # MONTHS IN PERIOD | 12 | 18 | 12 | 18 | 48 | 5 |
| ADJUSTED DV SCORE | 0.02 | 0.125 | 0.166 | 0.166 | 0.182 | 1.4 |

roughly identifying a point where a change in strategy has occurred. A strategy does not change overnight -- it is implemented gradually, and may or may not evolve purposely.

B. BACKGROUND SUMMARY

In El Salvador in 1979, regional developments converged with various changes ongoing in the country to produce the backdrop for widespread insurgency.

Pressure came from several sources: economic crisis fed by a global recession and a sharp drop in world coffee prices; popular disenchantment with the landed oligarchy; a growing and discontented middle class; a clamorous Left inspired by Marxism-Leninism and liberation theology; and the ineptitude and harshness of successive military governments.¹⁰⁸

In the 1970s, widespread demands for political participation and social reform increased. Electoral fraud in 1972, when the Army interfered with an electoral victory by a center-left coalition led by Jose Napoleon Duarte, prompted a cycle of repression which diminished the legitimacy of the regime and pushed much of the opposition to join Marxist groups. The revolutionary victory of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua in their successful overthrow of the Somoza government in July 1979 gave the Salvadoran people an example, and increased the fear of the Salvadoran military and government as well as the United States. A group of reformist army officers staged a coup in October 1979 hoping to prevent a repeat of

¹⁰⁸Bacevich, et al: 3.

Nicaragua. "The coup launched just enough reform to provoke the oligarchy and its rightist allies in the army into death-squad violence, while failing to satisfy militant popular movements."¹⁰⁹ Popular demands for reform and human rights improvements, expressed in massive demonstrations and strikes, were suppressed brutally by armed forces. Some members of the civilian-military junta formed in 1979 attempted to limit the violence but found that in practice the armed forces still exercised unchecked authority.

Various guerrilla groups began forming in rural areas, each with the goal of overthrowing the existing political system as well as modifying the economic structure and social order. In 1980, as government repression became more widespread and indiscriminate and even the most moderate reforms were blocked, various radical and moderate groups set aside their mutual differences to form a political opposition coalition, the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR). Guillermo Ungo, a moderate member of the junta, resigned in January 1980, and later that year became head of the FDR. In October 1980 a loose alliance also formed of the five major guerrilla groups, creating the FMLN, with an

¹⁰⁹Lane, Charles: p. 23.

estimated 12,000 active insurgents.¹¹⁰ The FDR became politically aligned with the FMLN.

The FMLN is managed by the Unified Revolutionary Directorate, a 15-member war council of guerrilla groups. The groups and commanders are as follows:

People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) - Joaquin Villalobos

Popular Liberation Forces (FPL) - Leonel Gonzalez/Salvador Cayetano Carpio

Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN) - Ferman Cienfuegos

Armed Forces of Liberation/Salvador Communist Party - Shafik Jorge Handal

Central American Workers' Revolutionary Party (PRTC) - Roberto Roca

While the more radical guerrilla-oriented movements are also represented in the FDR diplomatic political commission, which makes policy for the front, the FDR is generally moderate. Villalobos is the dominant leader on the Unified Revolutionary Directorate. He heads the ERP, the largest, most radical and doctrinaire guerrilla movement. Shafik Handal of the PCES also carries considerable weight in the FMLN councils because of his close ties with the USSR and the international communist movement, despite the relatively small size of the PCES. They have been generally less

¹¹⁰Bacevich, et al: 4.

flexible on resolving the conflict through negotiations than the FDR.

The two major political parties in El Salvador are the centrist Christian Democratic Party (PDC) and the hardline rightist National Republican Party (ARENA).

Debate has raged for the past decade in the US over the amount of arms and equipment the FMLN possesses and from whom it is supplied. The US administration has claimed that the FMLN is supported by the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Nicaragua, as well as by other socialist countries. While there is some evidence at the unclassified level of this support, the author did not find open source data which provided specific estimates of the extent and types of this assistance, how it has varied over the last ten years, nor how dependent the FMLN is on external assistance.

With a population of 5 million, El Salvador has an economy dependent on commodity exports; a badly skewed distribution of land and wealth; a traditionally authoritarian government with widespread official corruption and repression of popular institutions, and a military establishment which continues to value itself as the final arbiter of political power. Most of the agricultural land is used to cultivate non-food products for export, the benefits of which are not received by a majority of the peasants.

US security interests in Central America derive partly from the region's close geographic proximity to the US, its strategic location astride vital shipping lanes, and its raw material resources, as reflected by this speech of President Reagan to Congress on April 27, 1983:

...nearness on the map does not even begin to tell the strategic importance of Central America, bordering as it does on the Caribbean -- our lifeline to the outside world. 2/3 of all our foreign trade and petroleum pass through the Panama Canal and the Caribbean. In a European crisis, at least 1/2 of our supplies for NATO would go through these areas at sea."¹¹¹

US policy in El Salvador since 1981 represents a US approach to provide an ally with weapons, ammunition and other equipment, economic aid, intelligence support, strategy advice, and tactical training, in an effort to defeat an insurgency without committing US troops to combat. Congress placed restrictions on the number of US troops in El Salvador, and placed limits on their activities, such as not participating in combat.

Another type of aid which the United States provides as part of their counterinsurgency effort is known as "pacification" assistance. 'Pacification' refers to the use of non-lethal resources and techniques to reduce popular support for leftist insurgents and to achieve tighter

¹¹¹"Central America: Defending Our Vital Interests," in Realism, Strength, Negotiations: Key Foreign Policy Statements of the Reagan Administration Washington, DC: US Department of State, 1984, p. 130.

control over the rural population. Pacification projects include agrarian reform, civic action programs, food distribution, rural reconstruction, and refugee programs. Two elements of political stabilization include pacification and democratization. The latter is intended by the US "...to strengthen those basic institutions fundamental to the democratic process..." such as the judicial system, security forces, US-associated labor unions, and the electoral system.

Goals of the US in supporting counterinsurgency efforts in El Salvador, according to a statement by the Reagan administration in their presentation to Congress for requested security assistance, are as follows:

...US policy interests in El Salvador are to advance the cause of democracy; improve economic conditions; promote peaceful change; strengthen hemispheric cooperation; prevent hostile anti-democratic forces from gaining a strategic foothold; and to prevent the Soviet Union from increasing its influence in the region.¹¹²

From 1980-89 the US spent over \$4.5 billion on El Salvador. US funds constitute almost half of El Salvador's import bill and about one-third of the total government operating expenses. After over ten years the prolonged struggle has not led to the collapse of the government and its armed forces. However, the substantial US backing has

¹¹²US Congressional Presentation for Security Assistance Programs, FY86: p. 172.

not led to the decisive defeat of the insurgents. In the words of one analyst, "All that money has not yet bought success for US policy."¹¹³

Many argue that a political settlement is not possible. The history of the region, its geopolitical setting, the socio-economic structure, and/or the unbending ideology of the revolutionary insurgents are presented as insuperable obstacles to peaceful compromise.¹¹⁴

C. PERIOD 1 (1980)

After some initial hesitation, as the FMLN became increasingly powerful and successful, the Carter administration began to provide a relatively low amount of economic and "non-lethal" military assistance to the Salvadoran government and military. The Carter strategy was to provide a limited amount of military and economic means to prevent the overthrow of the Salvadoran government. The Carter administration insisted that some reform accompany the increased assistance, and insisted on a "...clean anti-subversive war."¹¹⁵ Some limited reforms did occur. "The Carter administration forced the military to accept a

¹¹³Lane: 24.

¹¹⁴Whitehead: 218.

¹¹⁵Arnson, Cynthia, "The Salvadoran Military and Regime Transformation," in Grabendorff: 122.

partnership with its despised enemy, the Christian Democratic party, to promulgate land reform, and to appoint Duarte as president of the ruling junta."¹¹⁶ The United States suspended further economic and military aid on December 5, 1980, pending an investigation of the deaths of four US churchworkers, apparently carried out by right wing/government forces. In response to the aid cutoff, the junta reorganized, appointing Duarte as president in hopes of gaining enough credibility to renew aid. On December 17, the United States resumed \$20 million in economic aid to El Salvador, but not military assistance. On January 14, 1981, Carter resumed military aid due to reports that the FMLN was receiving increased supplies of arms from outside the country and now posed a threat to the Salvadoran government. On the same day the FMLN expressed a desire to open direct negotiations with the United States for a ceasefire and a political settlement. The United States refused, and on January 16 Carter approved an additional \$5 million in "combat" aid.

There were no significant settlement offers by either side during this period, although the reasons for the US to decline the FMLN offer are unclear. As table 5.1 shows, few conditions at this time favored an agreement. The FMLN

¹¹⁶Karl, in Hamilton, et al: 175.

thought that victory was imminent, and so was unwilling to negotiate on US/Salvadoran terms. However, the Salvadoran government and military expected imminent US support, and were adamant about pursuing a victory as well. There was only one settlement offer by the FMLN, and no offers or acceptances by the Salvadoran government, and thus no settlement meetings took place, and no conditions expressed from which flexibility could be measured, the adjusted DV score for this period equals 0.2 (see Table 5.3).

D. PERIOD 2 (1981-MID-1983)

The election of Reagan in November 1980 led to a change in US policy favored by the right (in both the United States and El Salvador) and much of the Salvadoran military.

Expecting massive military aid for the Salvadoran government and armed forces once Reagan was inaugurated, the FMLN launched a hoped-for 'final offensive' in January 1981. Government success in surviving the offensive was followed by brutal repression by government forces and 'death squads.'

The initial counterinsurgency strategy by the Reagan administration was to win a military victory. In 1981 a guerrilla victory seemed likely. The FMLN was using quasi-conventional tactics and was highly successful in their campaigns. Initial US support was aimed at preventing the

collapse of the Salvadoran government and forces. The United States sponsored a massive expansion of the Salvadoran armed forces. The State Department specified that US military aid to El Salvador would not be linked to political reforms or human rights abuses.

US support in this period concentrated on training units, providing materiel, strategic advice and intelligence support. The Reagan administration tolerated the campaign of provocation and intimidation by the far right in El Salvador, due to fears of 'another Nicaragua,' and vowed "to draw the line against communism." "Reagan directly repudiated the Carter human rights policy and seemed to promise military aid without restraints."¹¹⁷ Hardliners in the White House and CIA talked of "winning the war first, then building a democracy." They ignored or made excuses for the human rights abuses by the security forces and death squads, tacitly accepting them as lesser evils. Repression and indiscriminate killings "played into the hands of the left." Much of the remaining moderate opposition was driven to become aligned with the insurgents (a disloyal opposition).

In the fall of 1981, the Report of the El Salvador Military Strategy Assistance Team -- jointly drafted by

¹¹⁷Brown: 118.

Salvadoran and American officers -- outlined a plan to expand, equip, and retrain the Salvadoran Armed Forces (SAF) into a force able to successfully combat the FMLN. Commonly known as the Woerner Report, this document represented the initial US counterinsurgency strategy in El Salvador. US support concentrated on providing materiel; training units; expanding the force structure; prescribing more relevant tactics; upgrading command, control, communications, and intelligence; establishing a logistics system; and modernizing and expanding the Salvadoran Air Force (FAS).¹¹⁸ US strategists did not seriously consider an active combat role in El Salvador for US forces, and wary of perceived mistakes made in Vietnam, were determined not to 'gringoize' the conflict.

Unfortunately, the team's members had neither the time, the expertise, nor even the charter to examine with equal thoroughness the other facets of counterinsurgent strategy: population control, social and economic reforms, the reinforcement of democratic institutions, improvement of government services, civic action, civil defense, or psychological operations (PSYOPs). As a result, the report dealt with these issues in passing or not at all.¹¹⁹

In January 1981 there were over 2500 deaths of civilian noncombatants by the armed forces and death squads, including seven Americans, leading to increased US

¹¹⁸Bacevich, et al: 5, 21.

¹¹⁹Bacevich, et al: 21.

congressional and public concern over human rights abuses in El Salvador.¹²⁰ The US administration would not acknowledge the direct responsibility of the Salvadoran government and military for the killings and tried to attribute them to the "extreme right" and even the extreme left, despite overwhelming evidence indicating otherwise.¹²¹ According to international human rights organizations and the Church, abuses attributed to the guerrillas were proportionately much lower than those attributed to the armed forces. US policy was marked by tension between those who emphasized military counterinsurgency and those who argued for reform and a democratic opening.¹²² Condemnation of US backing for the Salvadoran regime increased, both internationally and domestically.

In response to rising public concern over the Salvadoran military's involvement in death squad activity and the increasing potential for direct US intervention, the Congress began to restrict the administration's policy of seeking military victory by tying foreign aid legislation to a presidential

¹²⁰Brown: 118.

¹²¹Cooperation between the death squads and the security forces is further evidenced by the ability of the death squads to get through vehicle checks and operate during curfews. Uniformed forces have been known to block streets to permit the squads to carry out operations. No arrest or prosecution for death squad activities has occurred. Brown: 118.

¹²²Lane: 23.

certification of the curtailment of human rights abuses and the promotion of socioeconomic reform.¹²³

Congressional legislation required the president to certify compliance with certain human rights conditions within thirty days to continue US military aid to El Salvador, and further certifications every 180 days to continue military aid. Congress tried to force the administration to tie aid to human rights improvement. Despite evidence of abuses, beginning in January 1982, President Reagan certified four times that the required conditions had been met. Congress imposed a 55-man limit on the number of US trainers and advisors in El Salvador (although in practice the US military presence exceeded that number: by late 1984 there were over 100 US military personnel in El Salvador, and over 150 by 1987).¹²⁴ How the administration was able to violate this limit for so long is unclear.

Throughout 1981 the FMLN held the initiative and operated freely in many parts of the country. The SAF grew during this time at a greater rate than the FMLN, and by the end of the year the military was beginning to hold its own. "Attempts to address root causes during this period enjoyed

¹²³Karl, Terry, in Hamilton: 175.

¹²⁴Bacevich, et al: 5.

less success than did efforts to stabilize the military situation."¹²⁵

In 1981 the FDR/FMLN came out in favor of negotiations to end the war, an initiative tentatively supported by Duarte and the Christian Democrats. ...Mexico began a series of diplomatic activities calling for negotiations, which ultimately culminated in the Contadora peace initiative in 1983. The Reagan administration's persistent refusal to support such a dialogue soon became a major obstacle to mediation efforts between the Duarte government and the FDR-FMLN, and diplomatically isolated the United States.¹²⁶

On September 29, 1981, in an address to the United Nations' General Assembly, President Duarte called for the FMLN to lay down their arms and negotiate a political settlement. However, he ruled out direct talks with the FMLN.

The 1982 elections were intended to choose the Salvadoran Constituent Assembly, which would write a new constitution and choose an interim president to govern until new elections, to be held in 1983 or 1984. The left claimed it was unable to participate in the election due to fear of intimidation by the Right.¹²⁷ The government had placed restrictions on campaigning and eliminated opposition newspapers. The elections did not produce the results US policymakers had hoped for -- instead of a victory by the

¹²⁵Bacevich, et al: 6.

¹²⁶Karl, Terry, in Hamilton: 175.

¹²⁷LaFeber: 288.

centrist PDC, the ARENA coalition was able to build a majority coalition. The United States was obliged to pressure the military to prevent an ARENA candidate from assuming office. This deprived the US administration of much of the opportunity it sought to gain from the election through increasing the legitimacy of the Salvadoran government. The administration recognized that this was needed to persuade Congress to continue approving aid. The US pressured the military to appoint a moderate, Alvarado Magana. The military, faced with possible cutoff or reduction of aid, complied. However, the 1982 elections had little effect on the exercise of power in El Salvador as the armed forces continued to dominate policy. Human rights abuses continued at a high level, especially targeted against the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) and the FDR. In January 1982 the commanders of the FMLN asked the United States to accept a negotiated settlement without preconditions by any of the parties to the conflict. In February 1982, Ruben Zamora, general secretary of the FDR, said that he and other exiled opposition leaders would return to El Salvador "to work for a political settlement" if the government guaranteed access to the press, reopened the National University, provided amnesty for approximately 500 political prisoners, and revoked legal strictures on labor union activity. The United States rejected the offer

and continued to resist such requests until a round of talks at the US State Department occurred in December 1982 which included two FDR leaders, Zamora and Altschuld. No significant agreement was produced. "Despite the temporary success of the 1982 elections in dividing the Left, pressure to support a negotiated settlement in El Salvador increased in the US, particularly because the alternative seemed to be the domestically unpopular prospect of direct military involvement."¹²⁸ Congress began to withhold funds from El Salvador, cutting \$60 million in aid requested by the administration in half to protest the lack of progress in the investigations of the deaths of four churchwomen and other US citizens. Congress suspended aid in May 1982 when it determined that progress on land reform had ceased. In July 1982, however, the Reagan administration declared that El Salvador had met the required conditions so that aid could be resumed. In August 1982, the US Embassy and the Roman Catholic Church reported that since the US administration's assertion of human rights progress in July 1982 there had been a large increase in political killings. In late 1982 and early 1983 a series of FMLN offensives led to an urgent appeal to Congress from the Reagan administration for increased military aid to El Salvador.

¹²⁸Karl, Terry, in Hamilton: 179.

In early 1983 the FMLN regrouped and successfully struck and briefly controlled new areas of the country. They controlled large tracts of Chalatenango and Morazan provinces, and were fielding a reinforced brigade supported with captured armored vehicles and artillery and engaging the army in conventional set-piece battles.

By September 1983 the FMLN had extended control to about one-third of the Salvadoran territory and had seriously disrupted the economic base. In late 1983 and early 1984 the FMLN mounted spectacular assaults, pointing out the underlying weaknesses of the regime and the military. In 1983, the US State Department, under Thomas Enders, initiated a dual-track US policy of pursuing negotiations while continuing counterinsurgency support to the Salvadoran government.¹²⁹ However, this continued only until shortly after President Reagan was re-elected. The negotiations were scrapped and Enders left his position.

Generally poor leadership and low morale plagued the SAF, indicating to the US that the guerrillas were not going to be defeated as easily as the Reagan administration had thought. "By 1983 it was clear this approach was not working."¹³⁰

¹²⁹LaFeber: 289.

¹³⁰Lane: 24.

The State Department argued that the death squads were increasing recruits for the FMLN and making it difficult to get military aid sponsored by Capitol Hill. Pragmatists in the administration "...insisted that defeating the rebels depended on a legitimate political order based on elections, social reform, and respect for human rights."¹³¹

During this period, as seen in Table 5.2, some factors favored a settlement being reached. Domestic pressure in the United States and international pressure for a settlement were both very high, and that in El Salvador was moderate. The US government released statements that the amount of Soviet support to the FMLN had apparently been reduced somewhat in 1982, although the US administration did not stress this development in its appeals for aid. Popular support for the government was low, suggesting that if that was a big concern of the regime they would approach a settlement as a means to increase its legitimacy. The FMLN also had the upper hand militarily, enjoying the most successes in this period and even using semi-conventional warfare methods. Both the Salvadoran government and the significant external supporters of both sides, the USSR and the US, experienced changes in leadership. However, the dominant strategies favored by the new leaders of both the

¹³¹Lane: 24.

US and El Salvador discouraged an agreement instead of providing a new opportunity for compromise. The Salvadoran military, and therefore the government as well, given the power of the military over the government, still pursued a strategy of pursuing military victory. Because the US administration also favored a military victory by the Salvadoran government to resolve the conflict, it did not use the leverage provided by Salvadoran dependence to influence a settlement. The level of conflict was escalating, indicated by the large increase in US military support, the estimated casualty rates of each side, the number of offensives and "spectaculars," and the number of human rights abuses in this period. Negotiation offers by each side occurred during this period, but the lack of flexibility in settlement conditions by the Salvadoran and US governments and the low level of flexibility by the FMLN show that neither side was sincerely pursuing an actual negotiated settlement. The amount of assistance the FMLN received from external supporters and how dependent they were on this support is unclear. The reasons for the apparent decline in external assistance from the Soviets in 1982 and whether this decline was expected to continue are also unknown to the author. The amount and types of weapons and platforms the FMLN apparently possessed compared to the extent and scope of the support provided by the United

States suggest that the external support to each side was not balanced. Mediation offers by the Social Democrat parties of Latin America were not acted upon, and thus did not indicate much progress toward reaching an agreement. The adjusted DV score of 0.125 for Period Two indicates marginal progress over Period One.

E. PERIOD 3 (MID-1983 - MID-1984)

In 1983 a series of major FMLN strikes jolted US policymakers into initiating a more 'sophisticated' counterinsurgency strategy, leading to several major changes which took effect by mid-1983. The Reagan administration began to increasingly recognize the importance of establishing a government that could direct the political as well as the military side of the counterinsurgency effort. US policymakers believed that a PDC government would help factionalize the FMLN alliance and weaken its efforts, politically isolate the insurgents, and give domestic and international credence to administration claims that El Salvador was a fragile democracy needing and deserving US military and economic support.

The administration formed the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, headed by Henry Kissinger, to find a more politically salable and effective policy formula. The Commission recommended billions of dollars of

economic assistance as part of a program of 'human development,' and making military aid conditional on an end to official murders and punishment of past human rights offenders.¹³²

US Vice-President Bush went to El Salvador in December 1983 to inform the military high command that high-level tolerance of death squads was over, and to demand a purge of the army's worst offenders. Bush requested the arrest, exile, or retirement of military officers suspected of complicity in death squad activity, and the trial of soldiers implicated in the 1980 murder of US churchwomen in return for a substantial increase in military assistance to the SAF in quantities sufficient to reduce the guerrilla insurgency to manageable proportions. He warned the military against overthrowing the civilian government, and threatened to terminate all assistance if the SAF interfered with the elections or failed to respect their outcome. Such pressure from a high-level source was apparently a credible threat -- at least temporarily. Some suspected death squad leaders were removed from their positions (but not punished or retired). Death squad activity declined sharply: from May-October 1983 there were 588 killings and 322 disappearances; from November 1983-April 1984 there were a

¹³²Report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America

reported 241 deaths and 113 disappearances, showing a significant improvement after increased US pressure.

A meeting took place in July 1983 between the US Special Envoy to Central America, Richard Stone, and Ruben Zamora. Preparations were made for a meeting "with an open agenda" between the FDR-FMLN and US representatives. In December 1983, Ruben Zamora and other FDR-FMLN members met with US State Department officials. However, nothing significant emerged from these meetings. US military support continued at a high rate during the talks.

A new constitution was drafted in 1983-84 and basic rules for political participation were laid down. US policymakers hoped that the elections would undercut the appeal of the insurgents. They believed that because the FMLN sensed imminent military victory as well as feared the death squads, the left would not participate in the elections, thereby increasing chances of a PDC win.

One of the FMLN responses to the increased US military assistance and the Salvadoran military buildup was to initiate negotiations. In February 1984 they proposed a "government of broad participation," in which the guerrilla forces would be incorporated into the Salvadoran army. Duarte demanded the rebels join "the democratic process" and insisted that he would not yield on a power-sharing arrangement.

The election of Duarte in March 1984 was crucial for continuing US military and economic aid to be approved by Congress. Political gains through the US perception of the Duarte administration made it easier for the administration to underwrite the Salvadoran counterinsurgency effort. The improvement in political and human rights noted by the Salvadoran Roman Catholic Church, international organizations, and foreign governments improved the international image of the Salvadoran government. The administration's "pragmatic tilt" induced Congress to respond with over \$200 million in military aid to El Salvador in 1984 following the election of Duarte. The leap in US funding transformed the character of the war.

The elections were also a blow to FMLN-FDR cohesion. Internal divisions increased over their response. The apparent alternative offered by the elections increased the potential for factionalism. However, this rift was only temporary.

Other changes occurred in the US approach to counterinsurgency.

American officers recognized... that victory required first redressing the grievances of the Salvadoran people. Behind a shield of security provided by ESAF, the government had to transform itself into an institution perceived as effective, impartial, and committed to bringing about genuine reform.¹³³

¹³³Bacevich, et al: 6.

However, understanding alone did not produce effective approaches to the integration of military activities, including security operations, civil defense, civic action, and PSYOPs into a coherent program of social and economic reform, known as the "other war."¹³⁴

In the early years of US support, its counterinsurgency efforts had the greatest impact in areas where the US military is most comfortable: increasing mobility and firepower, providing intelligence through highly sophisticated means, and constructing fixed-site facilities. As a result of US training and weaponry, and "the willful rejection of counterinsurgency in the 1970s" by the US military and planners,

...structurally, (the SAF) emerged as a force better suited for conventional war than for counterinsurgency. ...tactical air support, heavy weapons and battalion-size operations helped ESAF turn the tide in the war's early, desperate phase. Once the conflict reverted to a true insurgency, however, ESAF's unsuitability for the 'other war' became apparent. Subsequent attempts to wean ESAF from the conventional bias... met stubborn Salvadoran resistance.¹³⁵

US security assistance allowed the SAF to purchase heavy weapons of little utility in counterinsurgency, and to develop capabilities which are irrelevant or even

¹³⁴Bacevich, et al.: v.

¹³⁵Bacevich, et al: vii.

counterproductive.¹³⁶ The Salvadoran troops which had been trained as elite 'hunter battalions' were generally unwilling to adopt the small-scale 'search and destroy' tactics the US advisors recommended as key to defeating the guerrillas without devastating the country's noncombatant population.

The 'National Plan of Security and Development,' created in June 1983 by a group of US policy analysts,

...represented a commendable if belated attempt to formulate a comprehensive counterinsurgent strategy. ... (the Plan) prescribed a method for incorporating (the SAF's) efforts into an expanding panapoly of capabilities all intended to earn popular support for the Salvadoran government. The Woerner Report had aimed to create an army that could kill guerrillas; the aim of the (Plan) was to win.¹³⁷

The National Plan included:

- 1) ground sweeps through conflicted areas to remove guerrillas;
- 2) securing the area by establishing civilian defense patrols;
- 3) initiation of development and reconstruction programs by civilian pacification agencies; and
- 4) resettlement of reconstructed villages with internal refugees.

The National Plan represented the first ambitious effort by the US and Salvadoran governments to move from 'chasing guerrillas' to winning popular support. The Plan was

¹³⁶Bacevich, et al: 29-33.

¹³⁷Bacevich, et al: 21.

intended to create 'rural security' by driving guerrillas out of conflict zones, form civil defense patrols to maintain security in these zones, then use welfare and humanitarian assistance programs, superficial development projects, and psychological operations (PSYOPs) to build support for and control by the government and to reduce the appeal of and access to the insurgents.

The initial implementation of the National Plan, in the department of San Vicente, was known as 'Operation Well-being,' followed in Usulután in fall 1983. The plan failed, largely due to lack of funding, the SAF's inability to provide security for proposed resettlement sites, and the unavailability of sufficient land for proposed agricultural development schemes. The SAF also was not committed to forming the civil defense patrols. The military tended to distrust the villagers who were to form the patrols, so they were poorly organized, often unarmed, and poorly trained. As a consequence, the SAF needed more battalions to maintain a shield of the development area while continuing to conduct necessary operations elsewhere, and needed forces better tailored for the 'other war.'

During this period, Table 5.1 shows that more conditions favored a settlement than at any previous time. However, US military aid jumped markedly, limiting the extent of actual government reforms and making the military

even less willing to make concessions to terminate the conflict. The ratio of US economic to military assistance declined during this period, indicating greater attention to the military solution despite the reforms proposed earlier by Duarte. US economic resources allocated to the National Plan during this period acted more as a stop-gap to produce stabilization than to actually achieve restructuring and development needed to implement the plan. The adjusted DV score of 0.166 for this period (see Table 5.3) shows that significant progress toward achieving a negotiated settlement was made during the early Duarte administration. A comparison of Period Two with Period Three indicates that the improvement was apparently due primarily to the change in the US counterinsurgency strategy and the subsequent changes in the strategies of the Salvadoran government and military.

F. PERIOD 4 (1984-1985)

The failure of Operation Well-Being impeded subsequent efforts to implement the National Plan. Disappointment with the outcome convinced hard-core SAF commanders "...to forget about 'hearts and minds' in favor of pursuing guerrillas."¹³⁸ After this failure, the National Plan languished until 1986.

¹³⁸Bacevich, et al: 44

By 1984 US policies no longer faced major opposition from western Europe, due to what the Europeans perceived as a change in emphasis of the US counterinsurgency effort, resulting from the Duarte administration and significant reduction in human rights abuses. The European allies were still concerned with the threat of the US starting a regional war in Central America, and did little to support US efforts. As a result of the changes in the early period of Duarte's presidency, congressional support for the Reagan administration's El Salvador policy increased and international support for the FMLN was reduced.

The Duarte regime, with US backing, did some restructuring of the security forces and transferred some of the leading rightist officers outside the country. However, Duarte was discouraged from taking actions against economic elites, and the pending land reform was dismantled. Much of the substantial reformist goals were dropped. The US backed away from many reforms called for in the Kissinger Commission report, and began to push austerity measures making it difficult for Duarte to fulfill the "social pact" to benefit workers and peasants which he had promised. The US downplayed land reform and directed funding into projects promoting agro-industrialization. The United States spent hundreds of millions of dollars on benefitting economic

elites in the Salvadoran private sector who were unwilling to risk their own wealth in their own country.¹³⁹

By 1984, over 50,000 Salvadorans had died and 27% of the population had been displaced. Almost 80% of the population was unemployed or underemployed.¹⁴⁰ According to a poll in 1983, 51.4% of the Salvadoran population supported dialogue with the FDR-FMLN, and 10.3% favored annihilating the FDR-FMLN through a military victory. However, the Duarte administration was "...at the mercy of a US-backed military establishment that viewed negotiations as weakness in the face of Soviet-inspired communism and pressured the government to preside over a military solution..."¹⁴¹ The military effectively prevented Duarte from negotiating an end to the civil war, the formation of a new government, or the integration of the military with the insurgent armed forces. The Salvadoran elites renewed their pressures against a negotiated settlement and for a military victory. US military involvement increased again. The administration urged Congress to double military assistance, increase its training of Salvadoran troops, and increase the number of US advisers. The US helped create and train more

¹³⁹Lane: 24.

¹⁴⁰Karl, in Hamilton: 182.

¹⁴¹Karl, in Hamilton: 182.

effective central command and control procedures and several elite "hunter" battalions.¹⁴²

The FMLN could not match the government forces' massive buildup in manpower and equipment in late 1983. Through the early months of 1984 the FMLN continued to hold the upper hand in the conflict, holding approximately 60 municipalities. They were able to launch offensives of 500-600 troops. Later in 1984 the FMLN appeared to decline: they launched fewer offensives, and while previously they had been able to supply their estimated 10,000 member force through voluntary enlistments, they, like the government, began a policy of drafting or impressments.¹⁴³ The FMLN adjusted their strategy. They reverted to emphasizing hit and run tactics and other guerrilla warfare methods, including a sustained campaign of sabotage against economic targets.¹⁴⁴ "Unable to compete either in terms of manpower or firepower, the guerrillas tried to avoid set-piece battles."¹⁴⁵

US support led to a large-scale buildup in the number and types of aircraft in the SAF's inventory. The annual

¹⁴²However, the SAF often resisted using the small-unit tactics the US advisers stressed.

¹⁴³Anderson: 11.

¹⁴⁴English, 1988: 254.

¹⁴⁵Anderson: 11.

number of Salvadoran air strikes increased from 111 in 1982 to 1,081 in 1985. A new heavy bombing campaign was initiated in 1984. US aircraft began providing the SAF with information on guerrilla movements, so the SAF could bomb guerrilla positions. This led to increased civilian casualties, but reduced the FMLN's ability to move large units against large objectives and restricted their mobility. Although in 1984 the majority of civilian, noncombatant deaths were due to military operations, the US administration claimed publicly that they were due mostly to death squads. In any war, some civilians taking no part in hostilities may suffer as an inevitable consequence of attacks on legitimate military targets. However, in El Salvador, attacks by the military on noncombatants who lived in guerrilla-controlled or conflict zones, known as "masas", were often deliberate. Such attacks were intended to deprive the guerrillas of a population to obtain sustenance, having the effect of creating a large population of external refugees and internally displaced persons. The apparent need to minimize noncombatant casualties to gain and maintain the support of the civilian population led the government to reduce its use of indiscriminate bombing by 1986, although the air war continued.

The air strikes did not significantly affect the morale or fighting potential of the FMLN, but killed and displaced

thousands of civilians.¹⁴⁶ The government sweeps through rebel-occupied territory were largely ineffective because the FMLN simply moved out of the way. However, government forces at least partially reduced the FMLN's ability to achieve the large-scale successes which were common in 1983. The military's tactical operations and intelligence-gathering capabilities improved, forcing the FMLN to move in units of a dozen or less.

US aid prevented the overthrow of the government, but also inhibited a compromise from occurring.

The Reagan administration/Salvadoran government and the opposition can thus veto each other's preferred outcomes and produce a protracted war rather than the necessary basic agreement on such fundamental issues as the share of power to be exercised by the opposition, the extent of socioeconomic reform..., the fate of the contending armies, and accountability for past terrorist activities.¹⁴⁷

Duarte understood that the military and the Reagan administration, the two leading forces historically opposed to negotiations, needed him to maintain US aid. This realization motivated Duarte to propose negotiations with the FMLN in October 1984. Duarte hoped to shift the focus from military action to political negotiations.

Duarte did not seek US permission for his negotiation offer. Duarte announced his intention to meet with FMLN

¹⁴⁶Anderson: 11.

¹⁴⁷Karl, in Hamilton: 187.

commanders to discuss the incorporation of the insurgents "into the process of democratization, and the preparations in an atmosphere of freedom for the next popular election."¹⁴⁸ The Reagan administration was surprised by Duarte's offer, but supported it in later statements. On Duarte's initiative, preliminary talks began in October 1984 in La Palma, a village approximately 50 miles from San Salvador.¹⁴⁹ They were attended by President Duarte, the Defense Minister, General Vides Casanova (at the FMLN's request), and four FMLN-FDR representatives, including Ungo and Zamora. Salvadoran Archbishop Rivera y Damas mediated and the two sides met in a church.

Duarte offered amnesty to the guerrillas who agreed to lay down their arms and join the democratic process. He said they would have a chance to compete in municipal and legislative elections in March 1985. Duarte did not mention the reorganization of the Salvadoran army the insurgents had long demanded. The meeting produced mainly promises to meet again. The FMLN wanted a share of power in the government

¹⁴⁸Time October 22, 1984 "Appointment in La Palma," p. 53.

¹⁴⁹Ferman Cienfuegos, commander of a FMLN faction involved in a rivalry with Villalobos, was at the time more willing to negotiate an end to the war than was Villalobos' faction. La Palma was in an area dominated by the faction at odds with Villalobos. Some analysts speculate that Duarte deliberately chose this location as part of a strategy of divide and conquer.

prior to elections. They claimed that death squads would slaughter them if they laid down their arms. Ungo and Zamora hinted that the FMLN might be flexible about their demand for a coalition government. "Duarte yielded nothing on the most important issues: the rebel demands for a share of government power prior to any elections, and for the integration of guerrilla units into the Salvadoran armed forces."¹⁵⁰ The army refused to accept a merger with the guerrillas. The meeting produced mainly promises to meet again.

Talks resumed in November 1984 in Ayagualo, a village 12 miles from San Salvador. The FMLN called for a three-stage plan, which involved reforming the constitution, holding new general elections, and reorganizing the armed forces. "Duarte rejected the proposal as unworkable under El Salvador's constitution."¹⁵¹ Duarte's government offered the FMLN a place on the ballot if they would lay down arms and play by new political rules. FMLN leadership believed it would mean their physical and political death to do so, and rejected Duarte's proposal that they disarm and take part in elections. The demands of the two sides

¹⁵⁰"Plummeting into the Abyss," Newsweek, May 23, 1988, p. 49.

¹⁵¹"Second Round: Peace Talks in a Lower Key", Time December 10, 1984, p. 46.

appeared to be irreconcilable: the FMLN insisted on a provisional government, in effect scrapping the new constitution and beginning a new political process. They insisted on holding their guns and territory until the FMLN and government forces were integrated. The FMLN feared that if they gave up their guns they would be massacred. The government's position was that its legitimacy had been ratified through three free elections and establishing a constitution. They demanded that the guerrillas surrender their arms and repeatedly urged them to participate in the elections. The FDR countered that their candidates would be gunned down by death squads (which were again increasing their activity) and doubted that they would receive fair treatment by the Central Election Council. Because the government demonstrated almost no flexibility the two sides were at an impasse.

ARENA denounced the talks. At the time it appeared that the military had taken the initiative from the FMLN. An anticipated FMLN autumn offensive had not occurred. Conservative army officers had opposed negotiations with the FMLN in the past, and were capable of threatening Duarte's truce with the right. The proposal by Duarte to negotiate antagonized the right and the military, and initially received a negative response by the US administration. They feared that Duarte's efforts would thwart them from

achieving a military victory. The army was becoming more effective, and things lately had not been going well for the FMLN. "The Army believes it is winning the war, and some officers might take drastic action to avoid being deprived of their victory."¹⁵² The military strenuously opposed the talks held in October and November 1984. Most military officers were convinced that, with the increased aid from the US, they could win the war on the battlefield. Thus, despite the constant efforts of Archbishop Rivera y Damas to restart them, negotiations remained in limbo for most of the year."¹⁵³

The FMLN indicated more flexibility and sincerity to reach a settlement at this point than did the Salvadoran government. The Duarte regime was constrained in its ability to compromise by the military and the US administration. With US support and pressure, the Salvadoran government would have been more likely to reach a compromise. Despite a seeming impasse, if a proposal had provided CBMs for both sides and an international commission to provide security guarantees, the positions were not necessarily intractable.

¹⁵²Time, December 10, 1984, p. 49.

¹⁵³Anderson: 10.

The Reagan administration took actions that effectively undercut the peace process.

Besides refusing to support negotiations, the administration encouraged an escalation of the war in the days following the La Palma talks and sought to weaken the political forces calling for a dialogue. ...The Reagan administration's attitude toward dialogue and its subsequent criticism of the Duarte government encouraged right-wingers to renew their political challenge.¹⁵⁴

In 1984 the US administration moved increasingly away from the PDC and toward a newly formed alliance of industrialists, agro-exporters, and conservative politicians.

The FMLN launched a major offensive after the talks, demonstrating formidable military capabilities despite increased US assistance to government forces. The Army refused to abide by the Christmas truce agreed to by Duarte and the rebel leaders, demonstrating the lack of civilian control over the military. The attacks were blunted by government forces, who in turn launched an offensive in January 1985 to retake towns in the Chalatenango department. Government forces successfully recovered 7 of the 26 municipalities in the province. The FMLN responded with a new strategy. The insurgents refused to contest territory, and moved out of the way of government forces. In 1985, the military launched a 12,000-troop offensive into Morazan,

¹⁵⁴Karl, in Hamilton: 185.

another major FMLN stronghold. Their positive results gave the military increasing confidence that the FMLN would be defeated by the end of the year, and the government sweeps continued all summer.

The high command subsequently set narrow parameters on the president's freedom to negotiate and made compliance with these limitations a condition of its support for the government. It ruled out any formal ceasefire, declared that the executive had no authority over purely military matters, and insisted that any future settlement had to be based strictly on the 1983 Constitution, a document written mainly by the ultraright. Without assistance from the US, the Duarte government could do nothing to win greater flexibility or exercise control over the military.¹⁵⁵

In January 1985, Duarte said he would not negotiate further with leftist guerrillas until they changed their proposals, accusing them of not wanting a dialogue leading to peace. Peace talks were not resumed after the late 1984 initiatives, even after the PDC successful results in the March 1985 elections. The generally right-wing officer corps continued to regard Duarte with suspicion. Duarte was seen as a weak leader, unable to control the military or bring peace.¹⁵⁶ Even after the victory of the PDC in legislative and mayoral elections in May 1985, Duarte found

¹⁵⁵Karl, in Hamilton: 185.

¹⁵⁶Anderson: 9-11, 36.

his attempts to enact social reforms and revive the stalled land reform program frustrated at every turn.¹⁵⁷

Another opportunity for a negotiated settlement was offered by the Contadora process. The Contadora countries sought the agreement of Central American and other interested governments on implementing specific proposals to contain conflicts in the region. The 1984 draft treaty sought arms control and reductions in Central American countries; removal of all foreign military and internal security advisors; removal and prevention of future installation of all foreign military bases; the end of all support of "irregular forces;" and suppression of arms traffic. The treaty also called for promotion of elections and international democratic processes, and for international political and economic cooperation. The provisions of the treaty addressed every one of the stated objectives of the United States in the region. The treaty would have required policy changes in all Central American countries, and the US, Cuba, and the USSR. After the draft treaty was accepted by all Central American countries, including Nicaragua, the Reagan administration opposed it, claiming uncertain verification and insufficient guarantees of Nicaraguan democracy. The United States then persuaded

¹⁵⁷Anderson: 9.

Costa Rica, Honduras, and El Salvador to indicate their disapproval and overturn their former approval. The Reagan administration was unwilling to accept restrictions of the treaty on US policy in Central America, and did not want to support a treaty which would allow consolidation of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua or require concessions in the US administration's Salvadoran policy. Therefore the US did not cooperate with or support the Contadora process. Contadora had provided a workable framework, but US policymakers did not attempt to work with the Contadora countries to resolve the issues of verification with which the administration claimed it was concerned.

Some US policymakers were concerned that excessive support for the negotiated process would lead to increasing pressures for the withdrawal option, indicated in such statements as "...Contadora is to Central America what the Paris Accords were to South Vietnam: a high-sounding pretext for a walkaway."¹⁵⁸ Jack Child points out that the Contadora process should have been seen and used as a confidence-building regime with provisions for effective verification, safeguarding the security interests of the Central American and Latin American countries as well as of the US.

¹⁵⁸Child, in Fauriol: 151.

By 1985 several factors were beginning to give the Salvadoran military the upper hand in the field. The army became increasingly adept at small-unit tactics and began receiving better leadership from their US-trained officer corps. The SAF "...clearly had thwarted enemy attempts to achieve a decision through quasiconventional tactics."¹⁵⁹ The strength of full-time members of the FMLN was assessed to have dropped to an estimated 6,000-7,000 active insurgents.

In response to the government's altered strategy the FMLN mounted a broad campaign of economic sabotage. The guerrillas retained the capability for occasional mass attacks, but these became less frequent as the FMLN felt the need to conserve their dwindling manpower. The FMLN began to focus on winning political support from labor groups. They continued their hold on large areas, often maintaining alternate municipal governments. The FMLN turned to trying to weaken local control, through means such as kidnapping or killing local officials and members of the civil defense forces, and began to concentrate on targets such as the electric grid and transportation, with the intention of destroying the local infrastructure.¹⁶⁰ From 1982-1985 San

¹⁵⁹Bacevich, et al: 6.

¹⁶⁰English: 254.

Salvador had been spared. However, in 1985 the FMLN turned to urban terrorism in San Salvador.

As the Duarte regime's support continued to dwindle, human rights abuses attributed to the right increased again and chaos in political institutions became increasingly common. By 1985, Duarte had lost much of his political base. Duarte did not follow the reformist agenda outlined in his campaign, due much to the pressure of the military against the reforms as well as a lack of support for them from the United States. While Duarte made overtures of peace talks and even met with the FMLN, the total lack of flexibility in the government's settlement conditions in this period indicate that the government was not sincerely seeking a negotiated political settlement. The Reagan administration wanted to continue pursuing a strategy to win a military victory, and let Duarte know it would not support a negotiated settlement. US insistence on a predominantly military solution reinforced the power of the SAF, which constrained the political space of the civilian regime and its options for reform and negotiations.

Table 5.2 shows that during this period several conditions favored a settlement. While several meetings occurred, no flexibility was shown by the government in its settlement conditions. The Salvadoran military was determined to win a military victory and the Reagan

administration supported them in those efforts. Due to military pressure, the Duarte government was unable to make the reforms and concessions which were more likely to produce an acceptable strategy of trying to achieve a military victory, although Congress constrained those efforts. However, the international legitimacy provided by the Duarte regime afforded the Reagan administration more room to pursue such a strategy behind a screen of limited reform, as well as the significant reduction in human rights abuses (forced by US threats of aid cut-off). The adjusted DV score of 0.166 for this period is equal to that of the previous period (see Table 5.3), despite the increased flexibility in the FMLN's conditions. This demonstrates a lack of progress toward achieving effective conflict termination of the Salvadoran insurgency. The most significant factor leading to this lack of progress is apparently the change in the counterinsurgency strategy of the United States as well as that of the Salvadoran government and military.

G. PERIOD 5 (1986 - 1989)

The Salvadoran government's inefficient and corrupt management of pacification programs influenced the military's desire to increase its own role in pacification. After the failure of 'Operation Well-Being' the focus of the

National Plan changed. Instead of extensive government-sponsored reconstruction and development projects, they relied on only temporary, short-term civic action programs directed by the SAF. The SAF became the leading actor in pacification programs. Non-military efforts became increasingly coordinated with military efforts, frequently managed by military members. The US Agency for International Development (AID) began to work closely with the development of CONARA, the Combined Plan for Restoration of Areas, which called for gradual wresting of areas from guerrilla control through coordinated civilian and military efforts.

In 1985 and 1986 the SAF gradually assumed more control of 'the other war,' increasing their participation in military civic action programs and PSYOPs. For the army high command, military civic action came to be seen as a way to increase its political and economic power. Due to the perceived inability of the civilian government under Duarte to coordinate the broad support effort required for effective counterinsurgency, the SAF and the United States created another phase of the National Plan in July 1986, a program known as 'United to Reconstruct.' This gave the SAF more control over pacification and nation-building, at the expense of civilian government control and authority. The 1986 Plan outlined the goals and objectives for conduct of

counterinsurgency for military campaigns and socioeconomic development. It proposed three phases:

- 1) "cleaning up" operations;
- 2) area consolidation; and
- 3) reconstruction and development.

The military put itself in control of the plan, receiving most of the funds from US AID.

The plan covered all 14 provinces, choosing target areas within each. The plan placed high value on creating a base of support for the SAF in the countryside, in response to the FMLN's strategy of increasing the dispersion of their forces and increased political organizing.

The pacification effort largely failed, due partly to

- a) the army's inability to keep guerrillas out of the program areas;
- b) the dispersion of resources because of the large number of target areas;
- c) FMLN economic sabotage; and
- d) again, the lack of a credible attempt to form civil defense patrols.

The plan was also inhibited by government and SAF mismanagement and widespread corruption. Food and other supplies were diverted by local military commanders and government officials. Another drawback was the type of development programs which the effort involved. The US provided the Duarte government with aid for pacification

programs, police and military training, and PSYOPs, but little funding was available for actual economic development programs, which could improve the poor majority. The reforms were deceptive and mostly without much substance.

Due to an unemployment rate estimated at about 50% and severe land scarcity as well as the sheer large number of people displaced internally, most displaced people have had problems finding a way to make a living. By 1986 an estimated 25% of the Salvadoran population was displaced, both within El Salvador and abroad. Neither US AID nor the Salvadoran government have made much progress toward implementing development, reintegration, and resettlement projects. The programs for the displaced are mostly welfare measures. The US government is the main source of food, temporary jobs, and shelter materials doled out to internal refugees. The civic action programs consist of short-term projects that combine handouts of food and clothing, dental and medical help, and PSYOPs. Instead of helping to resolve the conflict, most of the economic programs merely contribute to the stalemate and increase Salvadoran dependence on the United States. There is also incentive by some elements within the El Salvador who are profiting from the conflict to avoid its termination.

The FMLN focused on economic sabotage, a shift in tactical operations as part of a new guerrilla strategy to

try to exploit weaknesses in the government's base of support, broaden guerrilla support among urban working classes, and increase their political power through the labor movement.¹⁶¹

The FMLN's counter-strategy led to new security problems for the SAF: they were no longer able to concentrate forces in a few areas, but had to protect military installations and economic infrastructure throughout the country, in both urban and rural areas. The SAF, experiencing low re-enlistment and high desertion rates, as well as problems with its leadership and cohesion, was unable to deploy sufficient troops for security of the pacified areas.¹⁶² Of the two main objectives of the pacification programs, security and development, the SAF was consistently unable to provide much security for pacification projects, and did not sponsor any serious economic development.

Unable to flush the guerrillas out of the population, the SAF began forcibly removing population from FMLN-held areas, and bombing and shelling guerrilla-controlled zones in Morazan and Chalatenango. Since the FMLN had no fixed positions, the military's attacks were relatively

¹⁶¹Garcia, 1986: 409.

¹⁶²Barry: 19.

ineffective. The SAF increased the number of forced evacuations. One estimate claims that FMLN-held territory reduced from 30% in 1984 to about 10% in 1986.¹⁶³ Another analyst says that zones under guerrilla control were reduced by a third by 1986 from their level in 1982.

Duarte rejected an 18-point plan offered by the FMLN/FDR in May 1986. The FMLN had proposed that the government forces refrain from using aerial and long-range bombing and psychological warfare, and the guerrillas would agree to stop using antipersonnel mines, boobytraps, kidnappings of local civil officials, and transportation stoppages. In the proposal, both sides would have refrained from conscription, and from targeting combatants' and officials' relatives.

In June 1986, Duarte announced an initiative to hold peace talks. A series of church-arranged preliminary talks occurred in Mexico and Peru. Then the guerrillas refused to meet with Duarte in Sesori, El Salvador, saying it was pointless to meet because the government refused to accept their requirement of a powersharing arrangement. The FMLN did not trust the electoral process, whose rules were written under the incumbent government, and did not feel that the safety of their candidates running for office could

¹⁶³Garcia, 1986: 409.

be guaranteed. In November 1986 the leaders of the FMLN called for power-sharing in a transitional government.

Despite the armed forces' battlefield skills, by 1987 it had still failed to fully accept and adopt more appropriate counterinsurgency tactics. The result was an extended stalemate which neither side was able to break, "...a seemingly interminable war of attrition."¹⁶⁴ The FMLN was reduced in strength, but had no inclination to give up. In 1987 there were an estimated 10,000 militarily active guerrillas and "about as many active supporters who engage in sporadic acts of terrorism and sabotage..."¹⁶⁵

Duarte failed to reopen talks following a major FMLN attack on March 31, 1987 against an army base in El Paraiso, Chalatenango. The successful attack demonstrated that the dispersal of the insurgents into smaller units had not impaired their capacity to strike. This was followed by an attack on another base, in Morazan, in May 1987.

In October 1987, Duarte met with guerrilla leaders in San Salvador. Duarte claimed he would order a ceasefire, but FMLN said they would not agree to Duarte's demands because they would actually require an FMLN surrender. On October 29, the FMLN announced a boycott of further talks

¹⁶⁴Bacevich, et al: 6.

¹⁶⁵English, 1988: 254.

scheduled for the next day due to the assassination on 26 October of Herbert Ernesto Anaya, head of Salvadoran Human Rights Commission.

In January 1988 dialogue was indefinitely suspended. According to another estimate, at this time the FMLN was the de facto local government in about 30% of the country. In October 1988 Amnesty International cited a new wave of killings by right-wing death squads. According to Americas Watch, in the first six months of 1988, civilian deaths attributed to the military increased 44% from the 1987 rate.¹⁶⁶ The FMLN conducted five successful "spectaculars" in 1988 between February and December, against four military barracks and a dam. US policymakers feared that if the regime could not curb right-wing violence and show progress toward a settlement, it could ruin bipartisan support for the administration's Central American policy. The United States was still providing \$1.5 million a day in aid to El Salvador.

In 1988 several top FDR leaders returned to El Salvador to create the Democratic Convergence, an alliance of three left-of-center parties. They did not participate in the 1988 legislative and municipal elections, but in July 1988 Villalobos declared that the guerrillas would not oppose

¹⁶⁶Facts on File, 1988.

participation of the Democratic Convergence in the 1989 presidential elections, although the guerrilla war would continue. FDR participation in the elections was an act demonstrating at least semi-loyal opposition to the regime.

In a peace proposal drafted January 23, 1989, the FMLN proposed support of the presidential election if it were postponed six months and the government met a series of other conditions, including reform of the judicial system, reduction in size of the armed forces, and punishment of past human rights violators.

By mid-1989 it was apparent that

...the rebels recognize that military action is yielding diminishing political returns. Their actions turned off the public, hurt the democratic left in the election, and alienated potential supporters abroad.¹⁶⁷

Representatives of both sides met in Mexico in February 1989 to discuss this proposal. A proposal by the FMLN on February 21 offered to accept a "single army" if the government agreed to reduce the size of the armed forces to its prewar level of 12,000 from the present 60,000; dissolve the National Guard, Treasury Police, and National Police, and reorganize them into a single force under the control of the Ministry of Interior rather than the armed forces; and punish those responsible for massacres and political crimes.

¹⁶⁷Lane: 26.

They called for the creation of three joint commissions to supervise "the mutual withdrawal of a military presence," the revision of El Salvador's electoral code, and the process of international verification of political and military agreements. They also proposed that if the elections were postponed, the Legislative Assembly should appoint a provisional president to take power between June 1, when Duarte was scheduled to leave office, and the time a new president was elected. The proposal suggested that elections be held after a ceasefire began (amending their former proposal). The initial reaction of the military and the government was negative. The armed forces issued a statement describing the proposal as a "nefarious" strategic plan that was part of the FMLN continuing effort to seize power militarily.

When US Vice-President Quayle asked Salvadoran government officials to reconsider the FMLN proposal, the FMLN responded by offering to suspend military attacks against American civilians and military personnel and expressed hope for changes in US policy. The FMLN offered a 60-day ceasefire surrounding the elections if they were postponed.

Over objections from the Democratic Convergence, the FMLN sought to disrupt the March 1989 elections. The FMLN reaction followed the breakdown of talks over the request by

the FMLN to delay the elections so the FMLN could participate. The electoral process also became the target of FMLN actions, such as seizing and burning voting cards, and coinciding national transportation stoppages with the 1988 elections. These practices cost the FMLN some of their domestic and international legitimacy: "...Church leaders now denounce guerrilla destruction as strenuously as they denounce the sins of the extremists on the right... Both extremes are viewed as wrong."¹⁶⁸

In March 1989, the FMLN rejected a ceasefire declared by the Army on 28 February, labeling it a publicity maneuver. In mid-March, the FMLN cut off power and water and shut down transportation in most of the country on the eve of the March 19 presidential election. President Alfredo Cristiani came to power with a landslide victory of the far-right ARENA party in the March 1989 elections. In April 1989, in response to a surge of repression against opposition labor and human rights organizations following the election of Cristiani, the FMLN attacked three military facilities. In May they began heavy fighting in San Salvador. In May 1989 the FMLN offered to end assassinations and economic sabotage in return for the trial of former Army Major d'Aubisson for the assassination of

¹⁶⁸FBIS, July 6, 1988.

Archbishop Romero.¹⁶⁹ Hard-line military officers dismissed the FMLN's offer as a ploy. In his inaugural address on June 1, 1989, Cristiani made a five-point proposal for negotiations, but refused to discuss power-sharing.

In a new proposal in fall 1989, the FMLN offered to convert the organization into a legal political party and run in elections in 1990 after a ceasefire. They also asked that the army reduce its forces by 75% before they would put their weapons down. But this time Cristiani did not dismiss the offer out of hand. "No government in El Salvador can afford to disappoint the country's longing for peace."¹⁷⁰

The FMLN proposed a three-stage plan to the government at a meeting in Mexico. They proposed that the FMLN would agree to a ceasefire and participate in municipal and legislative elections in 1990, in exchange for punishment of human rights violators, sweeping reforms of the Salvadoran army, and changes in the constitution, but made no promise to disarm. The government agreed to meet again in Costa Rica in mid-October, for a series of planned monthly meetings. As the talks continued, the FMLN dropped their

¹⁶⁹Since d'Aubisson is one of the founders of ARENA, Cristiani would be almost certainly unable to accept this condition.

¹⁷⁰Lane: 62.

demands for powersharing. The discussions concluded on 15 September, and both sides agreed to continue talks in October in Costa Rica. Two days later, Villalobos announced that the FMLN would honor a ceasefire if the United States would stop military aid to the Salvadoran government, and asked that the government "end the reasons that have led to taking up arms and maintaining the war," and listed the need for sweeping political, military, and judicial reforms.

In mid-October 1989, President Cristiani proposed a ceasefire at talks in Costa Rica. The government requested the FMLN demobilize by January 1990 and offered virtually no concessions, although Cristiani suggested an "interparty review of the electoral system" and unspecified measures to "perfect the administration of justice."¹⁷¹ FMLN leaders rejected his proposal as "unrealistic and impractical." The FMLN presented a proposal the following day for the reorganization of the military, which the government rejected. The FMLN opposed any ceasefire taking effect before the government made substantial political and judicial reforms and were provided credible guarantees for their security. Both sides planned to send representatives to Venezuela in November for further talks.

¹⁷¹Facts on File, 1989.

On October 31, 1989 a bombing at the headquarters of a leftist labor group resulted in deaths, which the FMLN protested. In November 1989 Cristiani rejected a FMLN ceasefire offer and pronounced the guerrilla offensive 'totally defeated.' Immediately afterwards new fighting broke out, challenging that assertion. On November 10, 1989, the FMLN launched a major offensive in San Salvador and other areas. In heavy fighting, the military counterattacked. Despite the US belief that the FMLN was in decline, government forces had difficulty coping with the attack. The US administration claimed that the purpose of the FMLN offensive was to provoke the death squads in order to undermine US support for the government. In the aftermath of the offensive, six Jesuit priests were murdered, apparently by members of the military.

In December 1989, Congress threatened to withhold 30% of the military assistance to pressure the Salvadoran government to punish the killers and improve the human rights record, but the proposal was defeated. Americas Watch accused the US government of covering up human rights abuses committed by the SAF. They claimed that the Bush administration had played down and distorted human rights abuses to protect US aid to the Cristiani government.

In 1989 the Salvadoran conflict was at a crossroads at which a settlement was more likely: a new administration in

both El Salvador and the United States. The new political dynamics could result in policy adjustments that would affect the level and priorities of US assistance, and the specific conditions under which the aid was extended and administered. The Esquipulas II accords resulted in reduced regional support to the FMLN. There were indications of severe economic problems in the Soviet Union which would likely result in its reduced support for the FMLN and, in turn, diminished support from Cuba and Nicaragua. The FMLN was becoming more and more flexible in its settlement conditions. However, initially, the Bush administration continued the Reagan strategy in El Salvador. Under the Cristiani regime, US policymakers emphasized ties with the Salvadoran elite, trying to lay the groundwork for export-led growth based on a wider variety of cash crops. The Cristiani government reversed what gains there had been from land reform.

During this period, domestic pressure in El Salvador for an agreement was very high. However, in the United States the El Salvador support effort had become much less of an issue until the December 1989 offensive, and demands for a settlement were not significant. Other international pressure for a settlement was also much reduced. External support to the two sides was apparently not balanced. US aid continued at a high rate (see Table 5.1) and there were

no indications of an actual or anticipated reduction in the near future. While there are no exact figures we can assess that the FMLN anticipated (and probably experienced) significant reductions in their support during this period. This differential in outside support is a likely partial explanation in the discrepancy in the sincerity of each side to negotiate, shown by the greater flexibility by the FMLN in its negotiating conditions. The Salvadoran government and military felt sufficiently confident of their external support that they did not feel as strong of a need or desire to make concessions. Actual reforms during this period were low. The military situation of the period in general is best described as a stalemate. The conflict was apparently somewhat de-escalated during much of this period. However, it is necessary to compare estimated casualty rates and the number and intensity of offensives and spectaculars to determine whether this was actually the case. Complete data for this comparison were not available to the author.

The adjusted DV score of 0.182 (see Table 5.3) shows some progress toward negotiations in this period. However, despite considerable concessions in the FMLN demands for conflict termination, an agreement was not reached. The conditions which the FMLN could not concede on were those it believed threatened its political identity and the survival of its members and supporters. The Salvadoran government

did not relax the conditions by which the insurgents felt most threatened. Although several meetings between representatives of the two sides took place during this period, the Salvadoran government demonstrated almost no bending of its agreement requirements. The military sensed victory, underestimated the remaining strength and support of the FMLN, and believed that future US support was guaranteed. As long as the FMLN retained enough resources to survive and maintain operations, it was unwilling to give in to such stringent demands.

H. PERIOD 6 (1990-92)

Following the November 1989 FMLN offensive and the killings of the Jesuit priests by rightist death squads/military, the Bush administration began to place more of an emphasis on a negotiated solution and supported efforts to reach an agreement. The Bush administration realized that if right-wing violence continued there would be more calls to restrict aid or tie it to a negotiation process.¹⁷² In a December 1989 summit with Gorbachev, President Bush raised the issue of ending Soviet support to the FMLN through third parties such as Cuba. The Bush administration also turned to placing increased emphasis on reducing human rights abuses by government and the right.

¹⁷²US News and World Report, December 4, 1989: 33.

Peace talks between the Salvadoran Government of President Cristiani and the FMLN began in Caracas, Venezuela on 16 May 1990. The talks have been shrouded in secrecy to prevent them from being used for propaganda purposes. "The negotiations are not expected to lead to a quick agreement to end the civil war, which has claimed at least 70,000 lives and displaced more than one in ten Salvadorans."¹⁷³ But diplomats note that for the first time both sides appear to be seriously seeking to negotiate an end to the decade-old conflict. The participation of UN mediators, also a first, helped to raise expectations. The Salvadoran business elite did not trust Duarte to defend their interests in dealings with the left; Cristiani is one of their own and they likely allow him more leeway in negotiations.

The two sides remain separated by a political and ideological chasm. However, several domestic and international events have pushed them into making or hinting at concessions. Over the past year, the FMLN has accepted elections as the legitimate path to power, acknowledged that El Salvador is within the US sphere of influence, dropped demands for integration into the army, and recognized the legality of the 1983 Constitution and the government's

¹⁷³Gruson, Lindsey, "Salvadoran Foes Open Venezuela Negotiations," in The New York Times, May 17, 1990.

legitimacy. The Cristiani government has not matched the FMLN concessions, but has been making statements that are increasingly conciliatory.¹⁷⁴ Cristiani indicated that he would be willing to meet a longstanding FMLN demand to reduce the military from 60,000 to around 18,000, although both sides need to negotiate the wording of any agreement to cut military manpower and the timing of the reductions. Some senior military members have publicly acknowledged the need to build some type of checks and balances into the country's political system by splitting the National Police and the Treasury Police from the army and making them independent.

Turning to the conditions for successful termination outlined in Table 3.1, we can see that several factors in addition to those already stated favor a negotiated settlement. The conflict has been going on for a decade and war weariness is widespread. New leadership has come into office in one of the primary factions, the Salvadoran government, and in two significant external supporters, the United States and Nicaragua. Another major external supporter, the Soviet Union, is experiencing severe economic difficulties and political strains, making its support of the insurgents a low priority. The remaining significant

¹⁷⁴Gruson, Lindsey, The New York Times, May 17, 1990.

supporter of the FMLN, Cuba, also has less capacity to maintain support and is unable to pick up any slack. The US Congress has indicated its intention to reduce support to the Salvadoran government as well. The estimated appropriations to El Salvador for 1990 and 1991 (in Table 5.1) reflect reduced US support. The return to higher ratios of economic to military assistance also suggest a new priority of the US counterinsurgency strategy.

The positions of both sides have been undermined by events abroad. In a civil war funded to a large extent from abroad, the international climate can be nearly as important as government legitimacy. Perestroika has undermined marxism, and reduced or even ended Soviet backing for revolutionary movements. US perception of the East-West aspects of the conflict has reduced, and that justification for US support is also less credible now, suggesting a further reduction in US assistance. There has been a decrease in sympathy for violent revolution among most Latin American nations, and the unsuccessful example of the Sandinistas has also discouraged the revolutionary option.

After overthrowing the Somoza government, the Sandinista revolution experienced several economic and political problems as well as conflict with an insurgency supported by the United States. The combined effects of these problems influenced the Nicaraguans to vote the

Sandinista regime out of office in February 1990. Because they no longer control the highest political office and have fewer economic resources, the Sandinistas are less able to support the FMLN.

Castro's capacity to support the FMLN is also limited. The FMLN is changing its methods to try to regain and build domestic and international support. They have not abandoned the conflict, but have shifted their emphasis to the political and diplomatic arena. Villalobos has promised to respect political pluralism and US security interests.

The 1990-92 period is still ongoing, but we can make some speculations of the next 2 1/2 years given the events from January-May 1990 and consider current trends. The adjusted DV score of 1.4 for the January-May 1990 period (see Table 5.3) shows considerable progress toward reaching a negotiated settlement thus far.

Each side has become more sincere about actually reaching a negotiated settlement, due to the above constraints, war weariness, and the extended stalemate. Frequent proposals and actual meetings have characterized the past year. There has been increasing flexibility in the proposals of both sides (although much more in the conditions of the FMLN) indicating an agreement to work out a compromise. Popular support for the FMLN has reduced, due partly to war weariness as well as to some the methods the

FMLN turned to in the 1986-1989 period. Some significant government reforms have occurred, including a significant reduction in human rights abuses and in the electoral and political party systems. The abuses have been kept low, however, mainly due to Salvadoran dependence on US aid along with occasional US pressure to keep violations in check.

International pressure and support, in general, have favored an agreement. With the reduced assistance to both sides the conflict is apparently de-escalating, although if an agreement is not reached in the near future it is still unclear to what extent the conflict could and would re-escalate. There have been no significant offensives by either side since December. Casualty rates on both sides have been lower in the period since January 1990. An increasing faction of the military has begun to favor a settlement, and many of the hardliners who would prefer continuing to strive for a military victory can be influenced by their dependence on US assistance to moderate their objections if not to actually honor the settlement.

US military aid and the leverage it provides (when used) have contributed to some changes in the army's behavior: it no longer routinely commits massacres; although political killings increased in 1988 and 1989, they are way below those of the early 1980s. Corruption is still widespread. Most military officers can be expected to

cooperate with the civilian government as long as such behavior is necessary to ensure fulfilling their perceived need for assistance.

The ideology of much of the revolutionary agenda may likely have been discredited by recent events in the Soviet Union and the results of the Sandinista experiment, likely contributing to de-ideologization of some of the objectives earlier held by many members of the FMLN. De-valuation of power political values held as objectives by both sides as well as their external supporter can be favored by CBMs built into the agreement and an international security commission to guarantee safety to each side. Impartial and experienced mediation by the UN and the settlement meetings occurring on neutral territory further increase the chances of successful negotiations. Other conditions which must be included in the settlement proposal to increase the chances of success include: an amnesty offered by the government; provisions for fair elections (for which they already have a good foundation) and possible provisions for power-sharing; and an agreement on the disposition and organization of the armed forces of each faction.

US options had been limited previously by El Salvador's near-total reliance on US economic and military aid. In the past, if deprived of US aid the Salvadoran government would have been hard-pressed to sustain its resistance against the

insurgents' strength. However, the military has become stronger and better trained, the legitimacy of the government has increased, the amount of support to the FMLN, both domestic and international, has apparently diminished substantially, and the number of FMLN members has apparently declined. US policymakers can now reduce their aid without being concerned with an imminent overthrow of the government and the installation of a perceived Soviet-aligned communist regime.

Some significant political reforms have taken place in El Salvador. Some "democratic roots" have taken hold, evidenced by the successful completion of five rounds of national elections, major improvements in human rights, emergence of a competitive (although incomplete) party system, and strong evidence from turnout rates and survey research that the majority of Salvadorans applaud the democratic character (if not the performance) of the regime.¹⁷⁵ How to incorporate the extreme Left into the political process remains one of the vexing issues for achieving conflict termination. Through labor unions and other forms of peaceful activism the FMLN-FDR could build its base of legal political support. The FMLN has conceded that elections may be a way for them to move back into the

¹⁷⁵Barry: 33.

political system. Elections are scheduled for 1991 and 1994: perhaps the government could develop a set of security guarantees to convince the FMLN to lay aside its arms and participate.¹⁷⁶

ARENA is still tied to the traditional elite, although it has been forced by dependence on US assistance to moderate its position and methods. Significant problems remain in the attempt to build an actual representative, democratic system. Some of these problems cannot be resolved until economic restructuring takes place.

An important consideration to assess the potential for conflict termination over the next 2 1/2 years is that significant economic reforms have not occurred. Given the socio-economic situation, even if a settlement occurs, unless it addresses one of the primary sources of discontent, it is likely that in the not-too-distant future political conflict will resurface at a significant level as potential for renewed struggle exists. Economic conditions are worse now than before the war began. Very little of US economic assistance has been used to actually improve the basic living conditions of the poor and landless. Most of the assistance has been channeled to programs aimed at stabilizing the government, to strengthen the business

¹⁷⁶Lane: 27.

sector and try to increase opportunities for US trade and investment. The superficial nature of the development projects did not adequately address structural socioeconomic problems, focusing on provision of short-term relief. Because of its alliance with economic elites and its distrust of anything it perceives as even remotely resembling "communism," the SAF has been unwilling to back reforms needed to implement substantive economic change.

If the Salvadoran military were to become dominated by a faction which believed that the military could continue the struggle for a victory without US support and thus resisted reforms and concessions, this would seriously reduce the potential for a negotiated settlement and for long-term stability in El Salvador. Given the current level of dependence of the Salvadoran military on US support this appears unlikely. However, as US support continues to decline, hardline factions may conclude that they have little to lose by going their own way.

International events could have significant effects on the potential for a settlement as well as for long-run termination. For example, a change in Soviet policy contrary to that of the present, or Cuban insistence on providing assistance to the FMLN, although unlikely, could affect the willingness of the FMLN to make concessions the Salvadoran government is willing to agree to. Another

country willing and able to support the FMLN could also affect the potential for a settlement, but no significant supplier appears to be waiting in the wings. A replacement for the United States as a significant supporter of the Salvadoran government, especially one that did not require as stringent restrictions on the Salvadoran military, would also likely have negative effects on long-run termination. A change in US leadership could also have a similar effect, but the new administration would continue to be restricted by the same constraints mentioned in Chapter Two, including Congressional restrictions and public opinion. The FMLN would have to commit a serious mistake such as a significant atrocity against Americans or somehow appear as a significant threat to United States security to justify a reversal in current trends of US support that favor a negotiated settlement.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study began by examining the problem of US support for counter-insurgency efforts of other countries in which the US becomes involved to a magnitude and duration way beyond the initial intentions of policymakers and planners, the costs of supporting the counterinsurgency effort apparently exceeding the value of the potential outcome. After over ten years and \$4.4 billion, "...many in Congress and the American public are wondering what the US has to show for its investment in El Salvador."¹⁷⁷

The principal goals of the US counterinsurgency support effort in El Salvador, according to policy statements by US agencies, are peace and stability, economic development, and a strong democracy in El Salvador, as well as increased security for the United States through preventing a potentially hostile regime with an incompatible ideology from taking power and aligning with governments hostile to United States interests.

This study assumes that because revolutionary insurgency is fundamentally a political problem, successful conflict termination of most revolutionary insurgencies at

¹⁷⁷US News and World Report, December 4, 1989: 33.

an advanced phase requires a negotiated political agreement as well as the use of military force. Thus it is important for policymakers to keep in mind the effects of US counterinsurgency support on the potential for reaching a negotiated settlement.

Counterinsurgency strategies relying on mostly military means and even those combined strategies that emphasize achieving a military victory are not compatible with US culture, history and ideology, nor with its domestic and international image and position. Historically, a long-term, large-scale military effort is not feasible for the United States given its political, economic and ideological constraints identified in Chapter Two as well as Congressional restrictions resulting from a combination of these pressures. As Chapter Four explains, a military victory also does not have positive implications for achieving most of what US policymakers claim to be their goals in intervening in insurgencies. Many military methods are apparently inefficient and counterproductive in trying to counter an insurgency, especially if not combined with an emphasis on the collection and rapid analysis and reporting of appropriate intelligence relating to insurgent movements.

In trying to achieve termination of revolutionary insurgency it is important to remember that the insurgents are willing to sacrifice terrain and space in order to buy

time. In this type of conflict, compared to most others, the insurgent faction is generally relying on the extended length of the conflict to achieve its objective of taking over the government. However, if a certain level of external support to the host government is guaranteed, as long as the government shows real progress in its reforms as well as in concessions for a settlement, then time can be to the advantage of the government and to its external supporter as well.

Limits on the level and scope of US support to the Salvadoran government over the last decade, imposed by Congress, have been critical to the ability of the US administration to sustain its support effort. Congressional restrictions were placed on US counterinsurgency support to El Salvador on the amount and types of assistance, and the number of US troops in-country. US advisors were banned from participating in combat, and US assistance was tied to requirements to reduce the number of human rights abuses, military massacres and indiscriminate bombing on civilians. These restrictions have limited US domestic and Congressional opposition to the counterinsurgency effort and allowed the administration to regain the consensus needed to continue the medium-scale level of assistance for a long period (at least ten years).

Given the moderate scale and scope (no direct intervention with US troops) of the US support effort, the administration encountered less resistance to its counterinsurgency support and could be assured of being able to maintain the assistance.

The Salvadoran case suggests that a medium-scale counterinsurgency support effort over a long period (of at least a decade) is feasible, as long as the constraints described above are not violated blatantly or for an extended time period. A sustained large number of civilian noncombatant casualties and flagrant human rights abuses by host government forces would likely violate these constraints. The lower political and economic costs of a small- or medium-scale US support effort allow policymakers to demonstrate that they are willing and able to continue countering the insurgency for a long period of time, thus countering "the power of the small belligerent."

The cliché of guerrilla warfare is that time is on the side of the guerrillas: the longer the war, the more likely they are to succeed. This may not be true in El Salvador. A war of attrition, in which the government has the firm material support of the US, may work to the disadvantage of the FMLN.¹⁷⁸

As explained in Chapter Two, widespread revolutionary insurgency is a complex problem and thus requires a complex solution. As shown in Chapter Four, combined

¹⁷⁸Anderson: 11.

counterinsurgency strategies involve using a combination of the many means available. Ideally they involve the coordinated, integrated use of force along with a mix of other instruments, including political and economic policies and reforms. Combined strategies should be tailored to the specific conflict and guided by a common goal. Such strategies are recommended under the assumption that while an important objective of US involvement in the counterinsurgency effort is defeat of the insurgents, the best means of carrying this out includes a combination of such tactics as psychological operations, political reforms, and civic action programs that provide actual development.

Another requirement of a counterinsurgency strategy with potential for termination which fulfills many of the goals of the United States is a long-range time focus. The conditions behind this type of insurgency take a long time to build up. In turn, to resolve an insurgent conflict, gradual solutions should be applied. Ideally, enough military force is provided to keep the government from being overthrown but not enough for it to achieve an actual military victory against the insurgents. The other components of a combined strategy, such as economic and political reforms and military reorganization and training, are then provided time to work to eventually result in the

loss of support for the insurgents and the gain of strength and legitimacy for the government.

The types of assistance that the United States has given the Salvadoran government show that US policymakers have used a combined counterinsurgency strategy throughout the last decade in terms of the means provided. However, within that combined strategy the emphases and goals of US policymakers have differed several times in the ten years of US counterinsurgency support. At some times the US strategy contributed more to achieving a negotiated settlement than during other periods. A lack of flexibility in settlement conditions over time signals an unwillingness or insincerity to negotiate. If policymakers lack such flexibility, an apparently combined strategy may actually be more of a strategy of military victory. For much of the Reagan administration this was the case.

Enough aid has been provided for the Salvadoran government to survive, but not enough unrestricted assistance was available to allow government forces to achieve a military victory by means preferred by much of the Salvadoran military as well as the US administration. Congressional restrictions and other US domestic constraints inhibited the administration's ability to provide the support needed to win a military victory. Ideally, the time which US support purchased for the Salvadoran government

would have been used to give the non-military components of counter-insurgency support time to work toward achieving a loss of support for the insurgents and increased strength and legitimacy of the government.

Political development has taken place which favors a negotiated settlement and long-run conflict termination. However, the time provided by US aid was not well-used to actually produce the necessary economic restructuring.

It is important to distinguish between US aid programs intended to reform and develop El Salvador's economy to defuse revolutionary pressures, and those programs simply intended to maintain the status quo.

Most US economic aid to El Salvador has been in the form of Economic Support Fund (ESF) assistance (see section two of Chapter Five for a description of ESF). This has contributed much more to stabilizing the economy and the government than to actual restructuring and development. This type of assistance has resulted in increasing the desire of some Salvadorans to continue the war in order to justify their continued assistance from the United States. Such economic assistance to El Salvador has also had the effect of allowing the government, economic elites, and the military to avoid reforms which could contribute to the socioeconomic restructuring that much of the population supports and the insurgents have demanded.

The long-term resolution of the Salvadoran conflict hinges on three inter-related criteria. The Salvadoran government must

- 1) have the judicial, military, and political means to increase democratic legitimacy and prevent a violent victory by rightist or leftist extremists;
- 2) have a political formula to facilitate a viable, legitimate reincorporation of all parties in the political process; and
- 3) continue to receive sufficient assistance to recover.

Because of the overwhelming position of the United States in the region and the extreme dependence of the Salvadoran government on US support, a negotiated settlement to the Salvadoran conflict will not be successful unless the US administration is induced to or decides to support a political settlement.

For much of the past ten years, the United States has not supported a negotiated settlement to end the Salvadoran conflict. Its continued military assistance also allowed the government to not make concessions and reforms needed to achieve such a settlement.

The changes in factors and strategies are exhibited in Table 5.2. Their apparent effect on the dependent variable, progress toward achieving a negotiated settlement during each period, is shown in Table 5.3.

Referring to the changes shown in Table 5.2, the influence of the comparative level of domestic popular support for the Salvadoran government and the FMLN and the domestic pressure within El Salvador for conflict termination through a negotiated settlement are strong forces for achieving an agreement. Government reforms and changes in the level of human rights abuses are an important factor influencing the comparative level of domestic support for each faction.

As Chapter Three explained, the sincerity of both sides to reach a settlement through negotiations, which by necessity entails a degree of compromise on both sides, is critical to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. The ability of a government to offer these compromises, in a country such as El Salvador with a history of military dominance of politics, is constrained by the level of support within the military for a settlement.

The factor most influencing the military's willingness to sincerely approach negotiations, as Chapter Three explained, is apparently its perceived potential of winning a military victory and its perception of the gains to be made from that victory versus what could be achieved through negotiations. This factor is influenced most by the military's recent record of military successes, and the comparative amount of resources it expects to have to

continue its flight. Thus, an actual/anticipated reduction of resources and/or a poor military showing (unless the military expects imminent successes due to such factors as increasing support, numbers, and training, or imminent enemy weakness) and its projection of insurgent support are critical in influencing the desire of the military to reach a negotiated settlement.

The host government's rationale is similar, except that a civilian government may be more willing than the military to forego a military victory. The government may also feel that it is profiting less from the ongoing conflict than are some factions of the military. The government may also have long-term stability in mind more than the military does, and thus be more willing to opt for compromises which would result in incorporating the insurgents politically versus attempting extermination of the insurgents and their supporters.

Factors affecting the desire of the insurgents to reach a negotiated settlement and to make the compromises necessary to achieve one are similar to those involved in the military's rationale. One of the factors affecting most strongly the insurgents' sincerity in approaching negotiations is also their perceived potential of winning a military victory and their perception of the gains to be made from victory versus what could be achieved through

negotiations. This factor is influenced heavily by its recent record of military successes, and the comparative amount of resources it expects to have to continue its fight. Thus, an actual/anticipated reduction of resources and/or a poor military showing (again, unless the insurgents expect imminent successes due to such factors as increasing support, numbers, and training, or imminent enemy weakness) and its projection of support to the military and government are critical in influencing the insurgents to reach a negotiated settlement. Like the host government, the insurgents will likely be more concerned than the military with long-term post-termination stability through means other than repression.

Economic difficulties in the external supporter and domestic pressure within external supporters relating to their support effort have significant effects on each side's perception of the comparative level of future support. New leadership in external supporters can also have significant effects on the subsequent level of support and pressure on each faction to reform and negotiate.

Mediation offers, while a necessary contribution to reaching a settlement, are not sufficient. However, there are some indications that some mediators are more effective than others. For example, the United Nation's experience and resources for peacemaking and peacekeeping (although

predominantly involved with international, not internal conflicts) likely are a significant contribution to the negotiations currently taking place.

Given the amount of progress between Periods 5 and 6, de-escalation of the conflict appears to contribute toward reaching an agreement. However, due to its occurrence simultaneously with so many other changes, the extent of its contribution is difficult to gauge.

Much of the influences behind these changes have been external to the two primary factions involved in the Salvadoran conflict, the government and the FMLN. "If there is a single cause for the rebel decision to move toward a negotiated settlement, it lies in the changing international context affecting both the government and the rebels."¹⁷⁹

One of the most critical factors affecting the progress toward a negotiated settlement of an advanced revolutionary insurgency in a case where both factions are moderately to heavily dependent upon external support is apparently the supporter countries' strategies, including their willingness and sincerity to reach an actual negotiated settlement. Changes in an external supporter's dominant strategy can be affected by the changes in the opponent's strategy as well as in those of the opponent's external supporters.

¹⁷⁹Garcia, 1985: 104.

A comparison between Period 2 (1981-mid 1983) and Period 3 (mid 1983-mid 1984) illustrates this point. Many of the factors are the same or very similar during the two periods. The major differences are in the US counterinsurgency strategy; the amount of popular support for the Salvadoran government; the amount of reforms promised as well as those actually implemented by the government; the new leadership of the Salvadoran government; and the dominant strategy of the insurgents. The reforms influenced many potential or actual FMLN supporters to be more willing to support the government, and pressured the FMLN to want an agreement as it perceived its support base to be declining.

The promised and actual reforms were influenced heavily by a changed US strategy in Period 3 which supported and helped engineer the political changes contributing to the reforms as well as the change in Salvadoran administration. These changes also led to the increased popular support for the new Salvadoran regime. The significantly higher adjusted DV score for Period 3 than for Period 2 shows that the new US strategy increased the potential for an agreement at this time. However, if a settlement had occurred at that time it would likely not have resulted in long-term stabilization since many of the reforms had not actually taken place, especially in economic restructuring.

The identical DV score for Periods 3 and 4 suggest that the US strategy in Period 4 acted as a discouraging effect on reaching a settlement which offset the positive effects of the increasing flexibility of the FMLN.

The counterinsurgency strategy of the United States and the Salvadoran government influenced the FMLN's desire to prefer a negotiated settlement due to the costs of continuing the conflict. However, the US approach and its assistance discouraged concessions and reforms. Because of the actual strategy of the US administration of preferring a military victory, it inhibited a settlement from occurring.

Another important comparison is that of Period 5 (1986-89) with Period 6 (1990-92). The DV score for January-May 1990 and the changes in this period discussed in the last section of Chapter Five suggest that a settlement is imminent. In the past year several factors have changed which favor a settlement more than any time in the past decade. The major differences in the factors between these two periods include: the counterinsurgency strategies of the US and the Salvadoran government; increased flexibility in the settlement conditions offered by the Salvadoran government; the new leadership of both the Salvadoran and US governments as well as of one of the significant supporters of the FMLN, Nicaragua, and changes in the Soviet Union which have also influenced its strategy in the Salvadoran

strategy; and the apparent de-escalation of the conflict. These changes can be traced to two primary roots: the change in US counterinsurgency strategy including their approach to negotiations, and the changes in the Soviet Union which have influenced its changes toward supporting revolutionary insurgency and limited the options of other potential supporters. This conclusion suggests that in a case of advanced revolutionary insurgency in which both sides are significantly dependent on external support, and the strategies of the external supporters, including their attitudes toward achieving a negotiated settlement and acceptance of the concessions such an agreement requires.

Significant changes in the external powers' dominant strategies can also result from effects exogenous to the each other's strategies and totally unrelated to the conflict, as several exogenous events occurring in 1990 and their effects on negotiation progress in El Salvador have shown. This is one of the limitations of the methodology used, as explained in the first section of Chapter Five. It is difficult to determine to what extent the changes in the factors and in the progress toward achieving negotiations are due to the exogenous events versus the strategy changes. In addition, the strategy changes themselves were likely heavily influenced by the exogenous events, such as the many changes occurring in the Soviet Union and its allies.

The results of the Salvadoran case study suggest that the conclusions likely apply to other cases of a revolutionary insurgency at an advanced state in which the United States becomes involved in a counterinsurgency support effort. One of the critical determinants of whether a negotiated settlement is reached is the US counterinsurgency strategy, including the amount of consistent, sincere pressure the United States applies to the host government to carry out political and economic reform and reduce its human rights abuses, and the US attitude toward reaching a negotiated settlement and influencing the host government to make the concessions necessary to reach an agreement. One of the caveats is that this conclusion can be generalized only for insurgent conflicts in which the host government and its military are highly dependent on the United States for support. Another important qualification is that the insurgents must also be willing to negotiate and sincere in making concessions themselves. The conclusions have limited relevance in the case of an insurgency such as the Sendero Luminoso in Peru, which is apparently not dependent on foreign sources for its support, and is so fanatical in its ideology that it is unwilling to negotiate or make any concessions. Such an insurgent opponent must undergo substantial de-ideologization and find its domestic base of support

significantly eroded (and that of the government substantially enhanced) and its access to weapons substantially limited to influence the insurgent faction to even begin seriously considering trying to reach a negotiated settlement.

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